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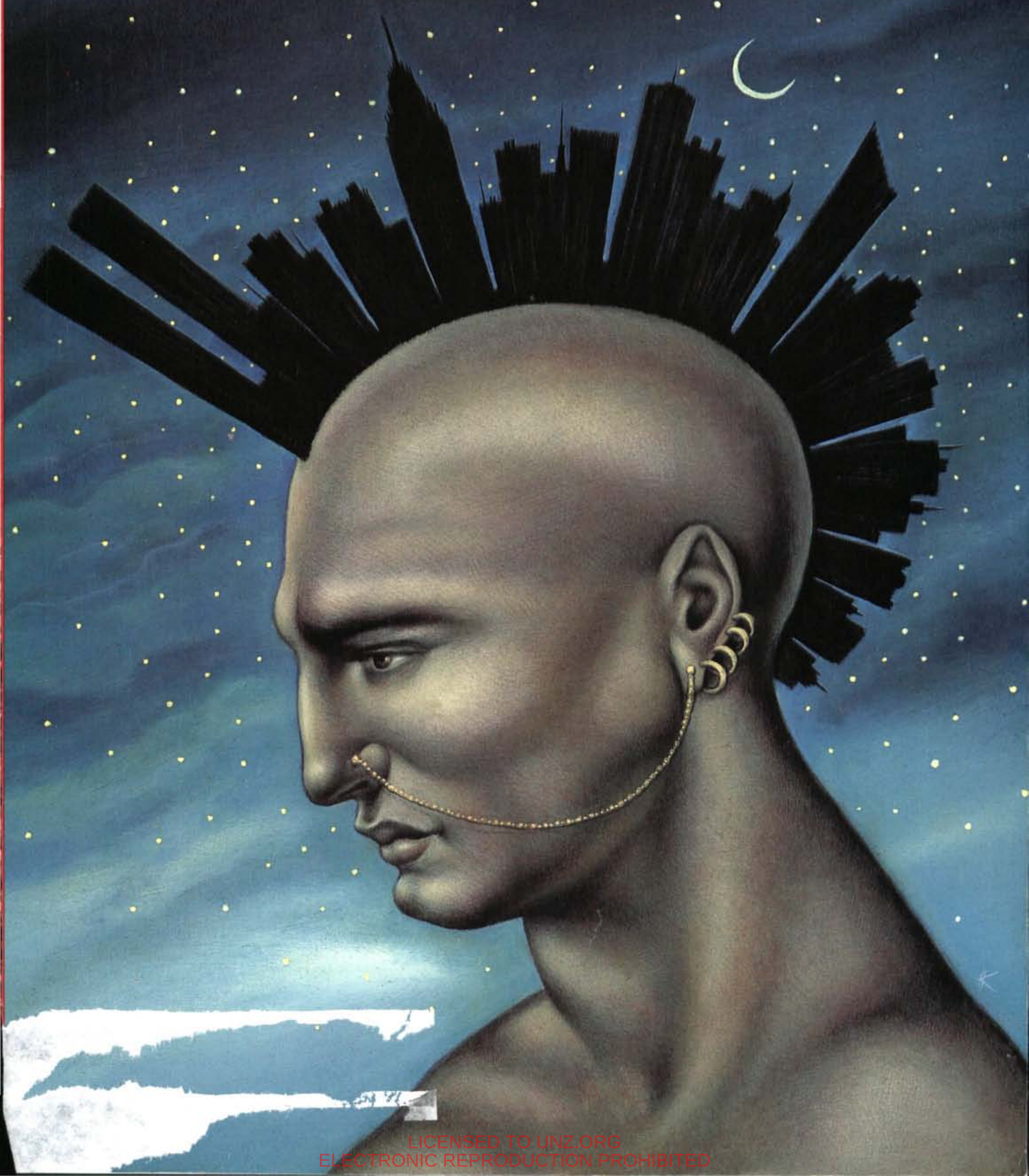

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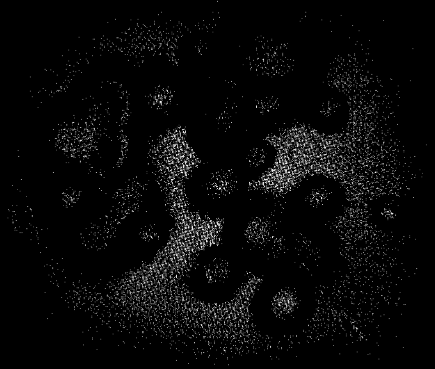

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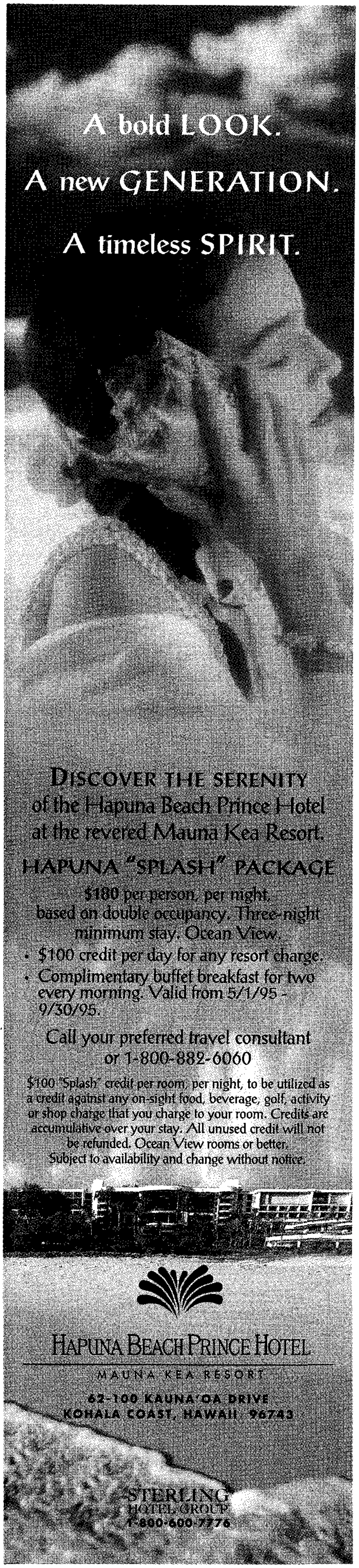

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JULY 10, 1995

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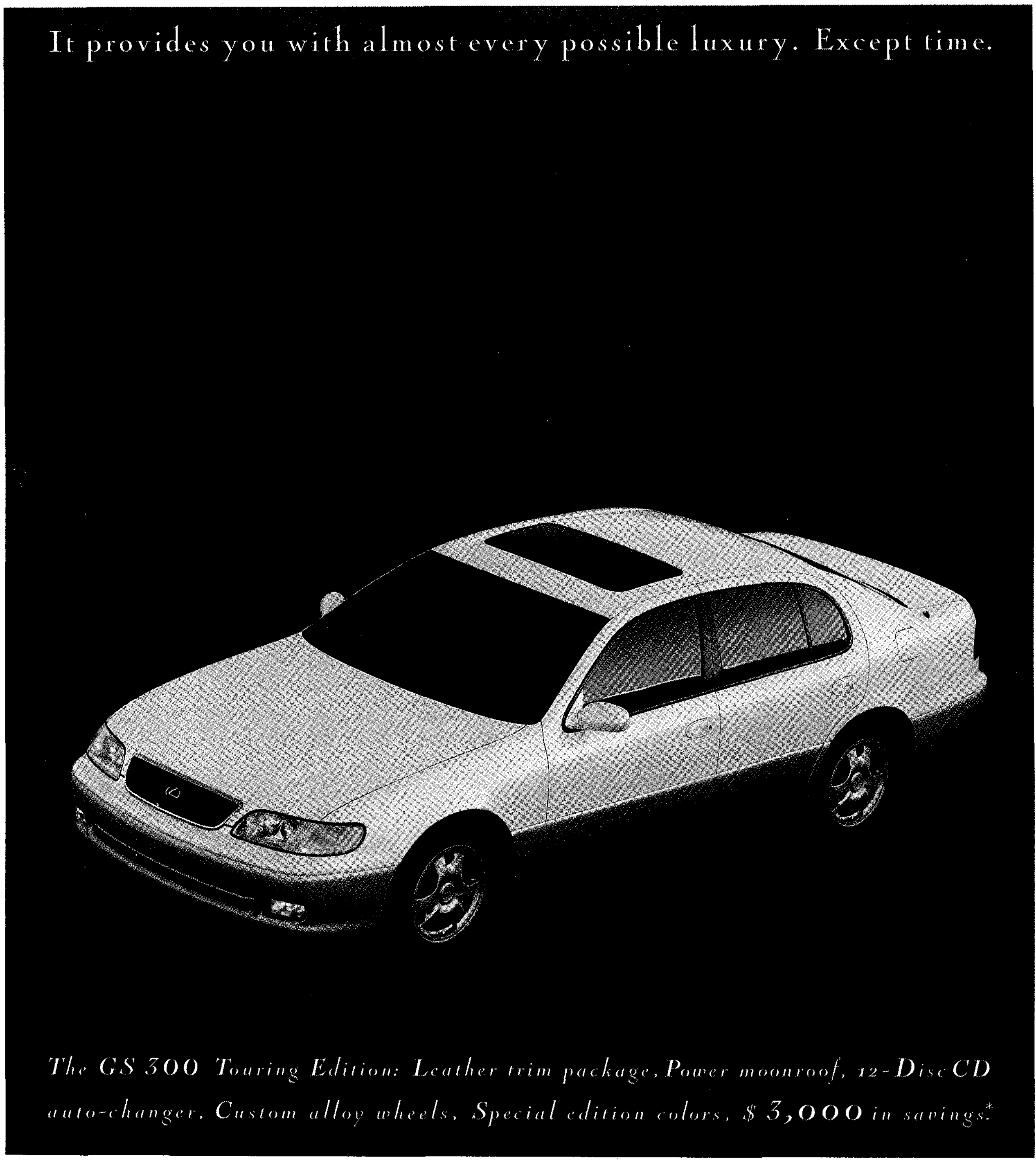
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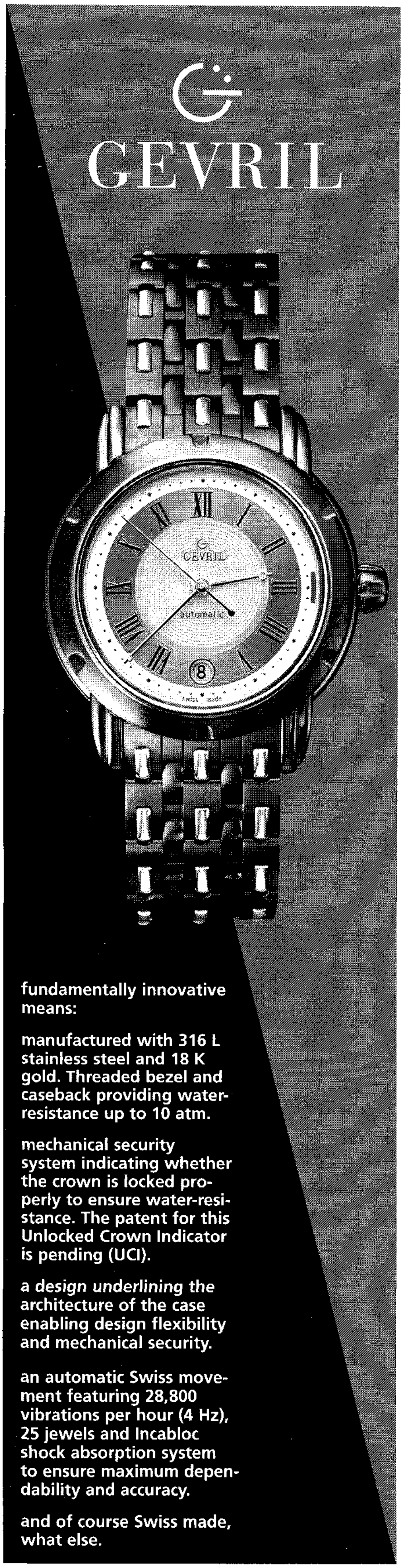

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COMMENT

THE G.O.P. TAX INCREASE

Frankly, my dear, there's some phony accounting going on.

"WE'RE sick and tired of having a five-per-cent increase described as a cut," said John Kasich, the chairman of the House Budget Committee, a few weeks ago. "This is frankly about language." Have you noticed? That word "frankly" is increasingly popular on Capitol Hill. (It's one of Speaker Gingrich's favorites.) The word is a little self-awarded prize for saying whatever is being said. It implies that the words it accompanies are some kind of admission against interest. And when politicians use it frankness is rarely their intention.

On this occasion, Kasich was promoting the most tiresome conceit of the current budget debate: the insistence of Republicans that they're not cutting federal spending programs—they're merely slowing the rate of growth. Through a concerted campaign of remarks like Kasich's, they have cowed most of the press into adopting this formulation.

It is true that the number of dollars spent on the most popular programs will continue to increase, not decrease. Under the budget outline agreed to by Senate and House leaders in mid-June, Medicare, for example, would receive $270 billion less over the next seven years than had been previously planned. But this would merely slow Medicare's growth from ten per cent a year to 6.3 per cent. Of course, not even the ten per cent figure reflects any planned expansion in Medicare benefits. It accounts for inflation, both in general and for health costs in particular, and it accounts for growing Medicare rolls, since the population is getting older and living longer. And the Clinton Administration's growth-rate projections for Medicare assume per-person cost increases no higher than in the private health-care sector. Holding Medicare increases to less than two-thirds of that amount will require real reductions in benefits.

To take another example, the Defense budget today is the same in dollar terms as it was in 1987, yet troop strength has dropped from 2.2 million to 1.6 million, there are fewer ships and planes, and so on. Who would maintain that Defense has not been "cut"?

But let us accept, for the moment, the metaphysical conceit that the essential nature of a "cut" requires that it be a reduction in an actual dollar amount. This

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raises a mysterious question. How do the Republicans propose to balance the budget in seven years? After all, the Senate and House leaderships have agreed on $245 billion in tax cuts. If spending is actually going up, albeit at a slower pace, while taxes are going down, how will these two lines ever cross?

To solve this mystery, we must look at the revenue side of the equation the same way the Republicans wish us to look at the spending side. Fair is fair. What we discover is that under the Republicans' own strange accounting rules their promised tax cut melts away even faster than their proposed spending cuts. Indeed, the Republican budget, which is billed as offering a $245 billion tax "cut," actually amounts to a gigantic tax *increase*.

Tax revenues for fiscal 1995 are projected to be $998 billion. In the Republican budget, these rise to $1.3 trillion by the year 2002—a thirty-per-cent increase! In all, over those seven years the Republicans are figuring on almost a trillion dollars in increased tax revenues. But Budget Committee Chairman Kasich is not "sick and tired" of having a thirty-per-cent tax increase described as a "cut." In fact, he describes it that way himself. If he wants credit for a tax "cut," he must acknowledge that he is also proposing "cuts" in popular programs like Medicare and school lunches.

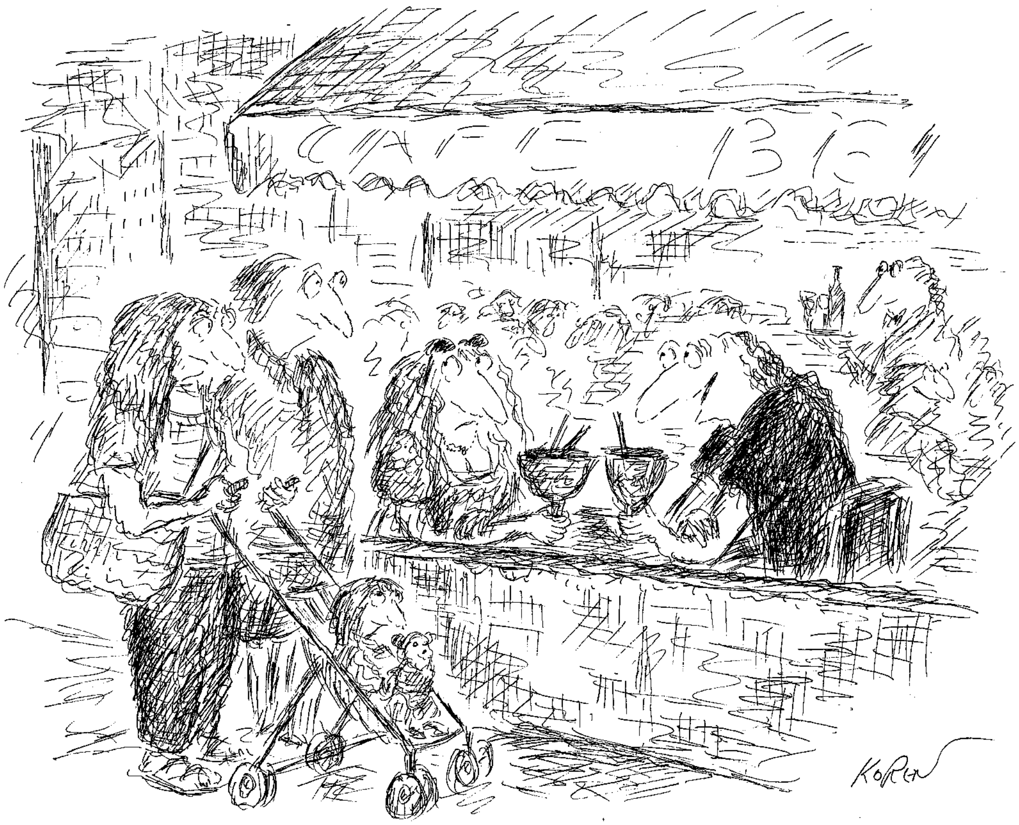
Even with that thirty-per-cent tax increase, by the way, the Republican budget does not actually balance in the year 2002. It calls for a deficit of almost $110 billion in that year. But this amount is expected to be matched by a surplus in so-called off-budget items, primarily Social Security. So the Republicans are counting on a huge Social Security-tax increase, as well as an income-tax increase, to help them balance the budget.

When it comes to government spending, Republicans ridicule the concept of a "baseline." (Indeed, the budget resolution agreed to last week by the House-Senate conference committee contains a special section ridiculing baselines.) Under baseline budgeting, you estimate as best you can how much current policies will cost in the future, and measure "cuts" or "increases" from that point. According to its critics, this is inside-the-Beltway fantasy accounting that builds spending growth in. Yet baseline budgeting is exactly what the Republicans have done on the revenue side. They assume increased revenues from current tax policies, then pat themselves on the back for delivering a tax "cut" from these higher amounts.

In fact, if we may now return to the planet Earth, baseline budgeting makes perfect sense, on both the spending and the revenue sides. Far from being an "only in Washington" phenomenon, it is how any sensible family or business makes its financial plans. The Republicans are not planning a tax increase in any reasonable meaning of that word. The increased revenues they are counting on come from two sources: from the economy's real growth over seven years and from inflation. Mostly, it's just inflation—the same phenomenon they refuse to acknowledge on the spending side.

President Clinton's recent proposal to balance the budget over ten years, instead of seven, can be looked at the same way. He, too, assumes increased revenue from inflation and economic growth. He, too, is merely slowing the rise in major spending programs. And it would be as silly to call his budget plan a "tax increase" as to deny that even his more modest fiscal discipline will require real cuts in the value of popular government benefits.

All this says nothing about whether a balanced budget is a good idea. Skepticism on that point has been expressed on this page. But even advocates of a balanced budget ought to recognize that disingenuousness about what it entails is self-defeating. A "plan" to balance the budget seven or ten years from now remains merely an aspiration. Making it a reality will demand a level of sustained discipline that our democracy has shown no appetite for. On the one hand, the Republicans swagger as revolutionaries, out to chop the government beyond recognition. On the other hand, they insist that no actual cuts are required in the most popular programs—just a slowing of the rate of growth. If the Republicans are sincere about wishing to balance the budget, these contradictory misrepresentations make their job harder, not easier. As John Kasich says, this is about language, frankly. —MICHAEL KINSLEY



"Today, we examined our life style, we evaluated our diet and our exercise program, and we also assessed our behavioral patterns. Then we felt we needed a drink."

IN THE MAIL

BLOCK THAT GRANT?

Michael Kinsley's argument that giving block grants to welfare recipients is more prudent than getting them jobs (Department of Disputation, May 29th) is fatally flawed, because it does not take into account the fact that contributions from a taxpayer would exceed, in the long run, the higher up-front costs of finding someone a job. Not only would tax revenues to federal, state, and local governments increase with more people working but once those people were working they'd be eligible for promotions and career changes that could enhance their income over time. Putting former welfare recipients to work would also help their local economies, because salaries would allow them to buy more goods and services than a meagre welfare check would. Finally, employing the current generation of welfare recipients could have the effect of ending future generations of welfare recipients. Then we could finally rid the nation of that ugly and demeaning term "welfare mother."

VINCENT A. FEDERICO, JR.
Branford, Conn.

In his article proposing a guaranteed annual income, Mr. Kinsley closes with the question "Is it a deal?" My answer is "Not quite." After almost completely failing to prepare low-income youngsters for productive adult lives, we in the United States cannot then simply give them a modest monthly stipend accompanied by an implicit directive to get lost. A guaranteed annual income responds to only one dimension of the problem it is attempting to solve: the degree of individual need. It does not, however, consider the varying types and causes of such need. Kinsley's proposal also fails to address one of the principles of financial assistance, which is to help integrate people into the fabric of society. The block-grant program does not take into account the risk and potential costs of further alienating those receiving aid. Nevertheless, reviving discussion of this idea and reëxamining its strengths and limitations might serve as a useful way to begin a redesign of the welfare system.

WILLIAM G. GRIGSBY
Philadelphia, Pa.

Mr. Kinsley barely acknowledges the primary beneficiaries of our present system: the bureaucracies that administer these various programs. He fails to address the fact that the people employed in these agencies gain far more from them than most welfare recipients ever will. In the same way that a drug culture creates a huge population of professional workers dependent on it, a poverty culture creates its own bureaucratic dependents. But who can say that these dependents are unworthy? They are respectable, hardworking, and educated people. Where will they fit in?

KATHLEEN CARDIN
Corpus Christi, Texas

STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY

Joe Morgenstern's article "The Fifty-nine-Story Crisis" (City Perils, May 29th) reads like a mystery novel. And, as he tells it, the good guys won all the way around—not only William J. LeMessurier, the engineer who discovered and solved the problem, but also Walter Wriston and the rest of the Citicorp people. It makes one realize that the term "professional ethics" is not always the oxymoron the cynics among us think it is.

At the same time, I think that, as the consulting engineer, Mr. Morgenstern shows himself to be a master of understatement when he observes of Mr. LeMessurier's integrity, "While we say that all engineers would behave as he did, I

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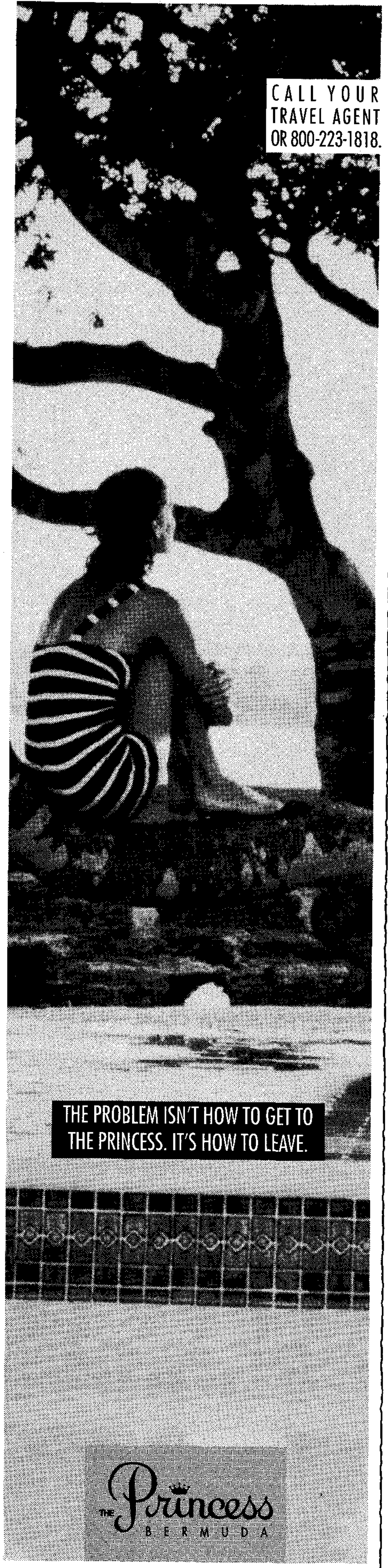
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carry in my mind some skepticism about that."

Douglass B. Forsyth
Baltimore, Md.

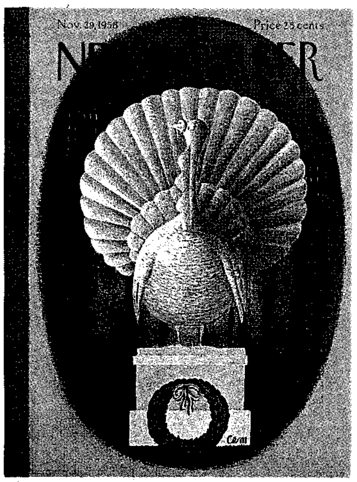
The spirit of coöperation and professionalism exhibited by Mr. LeMessurier and the others involved in the Citicorp crisis seems almost out of place in today's rancorous times. One wonders what would have taken place without the incredible coincidence of the newspaper strike's beginning the very day that LeMessurier was to have been interviewed by the *Times*. Would there have been a media frenzy with all the trimmings—interviews, statements taken out of context, defensiveness, accusations, professional sniping, blame-shifting, delayed repair work, panic? Probably.

Robert L. Golby
Durham, N.C.

Letters should be as brief as possible, and sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number to "In the Mail," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. They may be edited for length and clarity.

POSTSCRIPT • CHARLES E. MARTIN

For more than fifty of *The New Yorker's* seventy years, the artist Charles E. Martin, who died June 18th at the age of eighty-five, created an astonishing flow of spots, covers, and cartoons for our magazine. His first spots, which ran here in 1934, were simply signed "Martin," but his covers and cartoons bore the more familiar signature C.E.M. Charlie worked confidently in a wide variety of styles, even though he was self-taught; his most characteristic work was composed with an almost classical sense of balance and executed in a flat, decorative manner, using a muted, sometimes ethereal palette. His covers and cartoons were notable for their gentle humor, but a strong social conscience occasionally revealed itself, as in his 1971 drawing of a trio of Native Americans sitting in the wake of a speeding convertible: its bumper sticker reads "America—Love It or Leave It."



Charlie was a large, handsome man with a hearty, open manner. In his youth, he had been a serious boxer, and he moved with a boxer's stoop-shouldered bob and weave. In our offices, in a walking cap and well-selected tweeds, he looked more like a contributor to *Punch* who had wandered in by mistake. His close friend and colleague Mischa Richter once asked Charlie what had persuaded him to move from the ring to the drawing board. "One day," he answered, "I met a poet." ♦

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THE THEATRE

The Rainbow Revisited

Back in 1976, when Broadway was overrun with mainstream hits like "Annie," "California Suite," and "A Chorus Line," Ntozake Shange's "For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When the Rainbow Is Enuf" was an outright anomaly: a consciousness-raising work about black womanhood in America. Shange's play incorporated prose, poetry, and dance, and featured a cast of seven women on a bare stage telling stories about hope, anger, and love in the face of pain. By the time "For Colored Girls" found its way from the Lower East Side's Henry Street Settlement (where the show had its first New York staging, in 1975) to Broadway, though, it had won the critics' hearts. And the play's universal appeal made it that most important thing: a box-office success.

This month, Shange has returned to Henry Street to direct the New Federal Theatre's twentieth-anniversary production (through July 16) of "For Colored Girls." Given the current Broadway landscape of eye-popping sets and Hollywood-certified stars, it might be hard to imagine how a "choreopoem," as Shange refers to her work, could have hit it big. But the staging at Henry Street makes it clear; two decades later, "For Colored Girls" is still so vital that it seems like it was written yesterday (especially with the new references to beepers and H.I.V.). "I don't know if 'For Colored Girls' could make it on Broadway today," Shange says. "But I've always written plays without worrying about their marketability or chances of survival."

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Ecstasy—Mike Leigh's play, set in a dismal North London flat in the winter of 1979, reopens July 7 at a new theatre. The late-seventies costumes and set are depressingly perfect, and the actors bring the six working-class characters to life with great specificity and vitality. (Judith Anderson, 422 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

Hamlet: A Monologue—Serious Fun! at Lincoln Center presents Robert Wilson's one-man show, which begins just before Hamlet dies and takes place in a series of flashbacks. Adapted by Wolfgang Wiens and Wilson. Opens July 6 at 8 and runs through July 8. (Alice Tully Hall. 721-6500.)

Lonely Planet—Steven Dietz's drama, starring Denis O'Hare and Mark Shannon, deals with the chaos of life in the age of AIDS. In previews. (Circle Repertory Company, 159 Bleecker St. 239-6200.)

Lust—From London, a musical version of William Wycherley's "The Country Wife," with Denis Lawson reprising his role as Horner. Book, music, and lyrics by the Heather brothers—Neil, Lea, John, and Charles. In previews. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

The Play's the Thing—J. Smith-Cameron is a singer, Jay Goede is her composer fiancé, and Peter Frechette is a playwright who tries to keep them together, in Ferenc Molnár's comedy, which, in this adaptation by P. G. Wodehouse, had its Broadway première in 1926. Directed by Gloria Muzio. In previews through July 8. Opens July 9 at 8. (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

The Tempest—The summer's initial New York Shakespeare Festival production, directed by George C. Wolfe and starring Patrick Stewart as Prospero, employs elements of puppetry, dance, circus spectacle, and African-Caribbean music. Bill Irwin and John Pankow are also in the cast, as Trinculo and Stephano. In previews through July 9. Opens July 11 at 8:15 and runs through July 19. (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 861-7277.)

2 Boys in Bed on a Cold Winter's Night—Michael Curry and Robert Gomes are the boys in James Edwin Parker's new play, which takes place at 4 A.M. during a one-night stand. Previews begin July 7. (Theatre Off Park, 224 Waverly Pl., at 11th St. 279-4200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

After-Play—Anne Meara's comedy, about two couples who get together for an after-theatre dinner, has moved to a new venue, with Ms. Meara in a starring role, along with Barbara Barrie, Larry Keith, and Merwin Goldsmith. (Reviewed in our issue of 2/13/95.) (Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 239-6200.)

All About Steve: Musings of an Ebony Queer—In his new solo work, Stephen Patterson takes a comic look at growing up gay, black, and liberal. (Grove Street Playhouse, 39 Grove St. 923-9300. Closes July 15.)

Arcadia—Despite some casting glitches, the American première of Tom Stoppard's 1993 play, which shuttles between 1809 and the present, is an elegant production of an enormous theatrical feat. In a kind of intellectual mystery story, Stoppard provides the audience with the exhilarating illusion of omniscience, allowing us to solve a riddle of history from clues and connections that the characters, caught in time, do not see. Directed by Trevor Nunn. (4/17/95) (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

Buttons on Broadway—A two-hour jaunt down memory lane with Red Buttons, who, at seventy-six, has proclaimed himself the oldest living burlesque comic. He's no fossil, though—in this age of irony, his shticky routines are refreshingly funny. When he pulls his hat down over his eyes and sings his trademark "Sam, You Made the Pants Too Long," he makes you long for the time when a joke was just a joke. (Ambassador, 215 W. 49th St. 239-6200. Closes July 16.)

Chronicle of a Death Foretold—Lincoln Center Theatre presents a musical adaptation of Gabriel García Márquez's novel, directed and choreographed by Graciela Daniele. (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Closes July 16.)

Damn Yankees—Jerry Lewis, the King of Comedy and the King of France, is now, in his Broadway début, the Prince of Darkness—the Devil himself. The old pro delivers the goods. And Charlotte d'Amboise, a sensational Lola, delivers the goods and then some. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

Death Defying Acts—Three subpar one-act comedies, by David Mamet, Elaine May, and Woody Allen, that have the words "Written to Order" stamped all over them. (3/20/95) (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)

The Donahue Sisters—In Geraldine Aron's thin comedy-drama, three siblings—a homebody, an addled London housewife, and a jaded New York writer—gather at their family's home in Ireland for some sisterly sniping, a huge joint, and a few snorts of vodka. At the very end they recall a childhood atrocity; the revelation is so sudden and unexpected that when the house lights come up you wonder whether they're going to go back down for another act. (Irish Arts Center, 553 W. 51st St. 757-3318.)

For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide / When the Rainbow Is Enuf—Ntozake Shange directs a twentieth-anniversary production of her groundbreaking play. (Henry Street Settlement, 466 Grand St. 279-4200. Closes July 16.)

Fortune's Fools—A sitcom look at modern marriage and relationships, centering on a couple that is headed for the altar (Danton Stone and Dorrie Joiner) and their best man (Tuc Watkins) and maid of honor (Marissa Chibas). The stereotypical characters are likable enough, and the four actors—especially Watkins—bring the flimsy dialogue to life. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 989-2020.)

Hamlet—London's Almeida Theatre has brought over a postmodern production whose refusal to risk interpretation reflects Britain's current bland and winded state. Ralph Fiennes seems almost as unwilling to enter the vortex of Hamlet's torment as Hamlet himself is to take action. But his performance is a stylish event; he radiates an elegance of spirit that rivets the audience with its sense of unspoken mystery. Directed by Jonathan Kent. (5/15/95) (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200. Closes July 22.)

Having Our Say—Sadie and Bessie Delany, two sisters who have passed the hundred-year mark, presented their vivid life stories in a 1993 best-seller; the book has been adapted beautifully from the page to the stage by Emily Mann, who also directed. Gloria Foster and Mary Alice are brilliant as the sisters, who were taught by their family to "reach high" despite the dogging of Jim Crow. (4/24/95) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The Heiress—A revival of Ruth and Augustus Goetz's 1947 adaptation of Henry James's "Washington Square," directed by Gerald Gutierrez. Cherry Jones, who plays the title character, is exquisitely—almost unbearably—vulnerable. And the wonderful Frances Sternhagen is touching and funny as a widowed aunt. (3/20/95) (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying—In this revival of Frank Loesser's 1961 musical, Matthew Broderick has polish and timing, but it's Lillias White's gospel solo in "Brotherhood of Man" that lifts the audience into a zone of joy. As a paradigm for the Broadway musical's con game—winning the public's heart while picking its pocket—her display of guile made glorious is as good as it gets. (4/24/95) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

Identical Twins from Baltimore—The silly plot of this completely inept attempt at musical theatre takes absurdity to new lows: identical twins, who look nothing alike—one is black, thin, and beautiful; the other is white, fat, and not so beautiful—try to make it big as a singer and a ballerina, respectively. The songs are flat (there's not a memorable one in the bunch), and the over-the-top production numbers are crowded with too many tappers. For the actors, who do their very best just to make it to the end, it's a lesson in perseverance. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 831-2000.)

Indiscretions—The brightest spot in this production of Jean Cocteau's "Les Parents Terribles" a dark comedy about the perversities of desire in family life—is Eileen Atkins, who plays a severely wise spinster with her usual magnetic minimalism. Kathleen Turner, as a hysterically possessive mother, is an unfocussed sprawl with a distractingly unplaceable accent. Roger Rees, Cynthia Nixon, and Jude Law also star, under the direction of Sean Mathias, in this import from London's Royal National Theatre. (5/15/95) (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

J. P. Morgan Saves the Nation—Place comes before play in Jeffrey M. Jones's new musical comedy, a site-specific production staged on the steps of Federal Hall (at the intersection of Wall and Broad Streets). Presided over by a she-devil in dominatrix boots and a blond-wigged Uncle Sam in platform sneakers, it's an ambitious effort to tell the tale of financier J. P. Morgan and his 1907 bailout of the Stock Exchange. A large and vigorous cast of thirty-four, a varied score (late-nineteenth-century to Madonna), and the magnificent location make this a lively event in spite of the dull book and simple choreography. (279-4200. Closes July 9.)

John & Jen—Andrew Lippa and Tom Greenwald's "musical that grows up before your eyes" spans a forty-year period, starting in 1951, and explores problems of love and family through the relationships of a sister and a brother and, later on, the sister and her son. The book is often hackneyed and the music repetitive, though the lyrics to the songs ("Christmas," "Little League," "Graduation") possess an honest charm. Well staged by Gabriel Barre, and acted with great verve by James Ludwig and Carolee Carmello. Stuart Duke provided the deft lighting. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780. Closes July 9.)

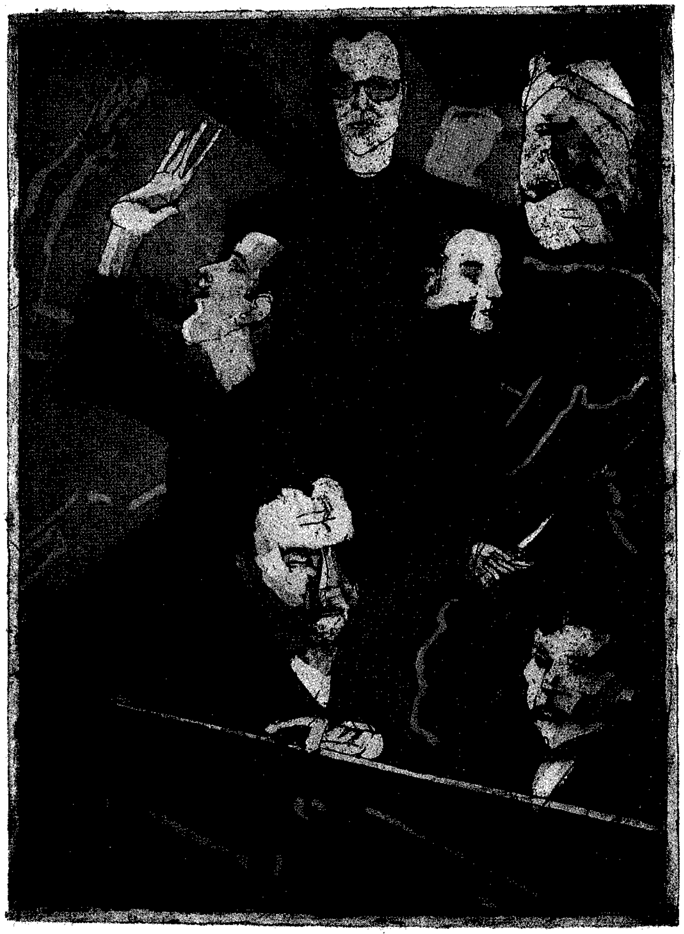
Lady-Like—Laura Shamas's drama about the love affair between Lady Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby, who fled Ireland in 1778 to live together in Wales. (Grove Street Playhouse, 39 Grove St. 741-6436.)

London Suite—Neil Simon knows how to cater to his audience, but he's serving leftovers: these four one-acts are painfully dated in both their substance and their execution. The main pleasure in this production is Carole Shelley, who provides some much needed comic muscle tone. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.)

Loose Lips—A comedy revue, featuring the National Transcript Players, based on records of spoken blunders by the Prince of Wales, Clarence Thomas, President Clinton, and other public figures. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 799-4599.)

Love! Valour! Compassion!—The eight gay men in Terrence McNally's beautifully written drama connect in ways that almost any nuclear family would envy. Under the nimble direction of Joe Mantello, the actors present humbling evidence of what love is and can be. (11/14/94) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

One Woman Shoe—The brother-and-sister writing team of David and Amy Sedaris bill themselves as the Talent Family, and it's a rare case of truth in advertising. In this encore production of their hilariously absurd show, three women who embody all possible facets of cluelessness are told by their social-services caseworker (played to Franklin Pangbornian perfection by David Rakoff) that they must put on one-woman shows in order to keep their benefit checks coming. The five cast members are all funny in a number of roles, but Ms. Sedaris, with her chipmunk's overbite and her remarkably plastic face, is extraordinary—she burns her way into your memory with a comic branding iron. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 475-7710.)



Robert Wilson, in "Hamlet: A Monologue."

ROBERT ANDREW PARKER

The Only Thing Worse You Could Have Told Me . . .—Dan Butler offers a procession of characters from the real world of contemporary gay culture, moving seamlessly from one monologue to the next in a one-man show that is by turns hilarious, infuriating, sad, and uplifting—a charmer. (Actors' Playhouse, 100 Seventh Ave. S. 307-4100.)

Party—Seven gay men get together to play a strip version of truth or dare, with terrifically funny (if occasionally didactic) results. The characters in David Dillon's comedy are stereotypes, more or less, but the solid cast makes them believable, and in the end you've had a look at some enduring friendships (and some nice bodies). (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321.)

Rob Becker's Defending the Caveman—A hundred-minute standup routine. Some of Becker's examples of discontent between the sexes are very funny (a lot of vigorous nodding goes on in the theatre—never by men and women at the same time), but a fair number of them are shopworn. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 307-4100.)

The School for Wives—The National Asian-American Theatre Company presents Molière's comedy, directed by Stephen Stout. (Vineyard, 309 E. 26th St. 683-9772. Closes July 9.)

Smokey Joe's Café—The Songs of Leiber and Stoller—A feast of early rock and roll, performed by a cast with Grade A lungs and legs. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

The Springhill Singing Disaster—Karen Trott plays all the roles, and all the guitars, in her comedy about the tribulations of a calamity-ridden folksinger. Norman René directed. (Playwright's Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

Sunset Boulevard—Betty Buckley has the monumental role of Norma Desmond, in Andrew Lloyd Webber's homage to Billy Wilder and Charles Brackett's 1950 fable of Hollywood corruption and dementia. (12/5/94) (Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4007.)

Swingtime Canteen—A re-creation of a 1944 U.S.O. concert, performed in a night club. Extraneous bits of plot threaten to derail the show, but the lovely songs, done with verve and charm, carry the day. (Blue Angel, 321 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Sylvia—In A. R. Gurney's new comedy, Sarah Jessica Parker, as a dog named Sylvia (who says there aren't roles for women?), brings meaning to the life of a middle-aged currency trader (Charles Kimbrough) while driving a canine-shaped wedge between him and his wife (Blythe Danner). Parker has some funny moments: you should hear what she says when she sees a cat, and her attempt to mate with a matronly guest (Derek Smith, in a good drag turn) is hilarious. But this upper-middle-class fairy tale settles too soon into a monotonous sweetness; it lacks bite. John Tillinger directed. John Cunningham and Mariette Hartley take over the husband and wife roles on July 11. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

The Tempest—The first of two outdoor productions by the Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival, directed by Thomas Nahrwold, continues through July 23. (Boscobel Restoration, Garrison, N.Y. For ticket information and directions, call 1-915 265-9575.)

Travels with My Aunt—Giles Havergal, directing his own witty adaptation of Graham Greene's novel, has captured the book's amusingly puzzled tone with his playful, inventive (though overlong) staging. Four wildly different actors all play Henry Pulling, the staid retired banker whose eccentric Aunt Augusta drags him into her international adventures. Jim Dale doubles as Aunt Augusta, and the other three skillfully handle some twenty additional parts. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane. 420-8000.)

Twelve Dreams—A revival of James Lapine's 1981 play, which he adapted from Carl Jung's case study of a young girl whose dreams predicted her own death. It doesn't add up to much, but the dream sequences are a striking amalgamation of the everyday and the surreal, and the performances, especially those of nine-year-old Mischa Barton, who is poised and moving as the dreamer, and Jan Rubeš, as a European professor, are strong. Also with Harry Groener, Donna Murphy, and Kathleen Chalfant. Directed by Mr. Lapine. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

LONG RUNS

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST: Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP / TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CRAZY FOR YOU:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **GREASE!:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **SHOW BOAT:** Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **THREE TALL WOMEN:** Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 279-4200.

DANCE

IN TOWN

PILOBOLUS DANCE THEATRE—July 7-8 and July 10 at 8: "The Doubling Cube" (première), a solo from "The Empty Suitor," "Shizen," and "Rejoyce." . . . ¶ July 11 at 8: "Collideoscope," "Masters of Ceremony" (première), "Animundi," "Walklyndon," and "Day Two." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Through Aug. 4.)

MONDAYS AT THE DELACORTE—The New York Shakespeare Festival and Dancing in the Streets present an evening of traditional and contemporary Brooklyn dance: Irish step and Russian folk, Shashmaquam (a Bukharan Jewish troupe), and Complexions (a modern-dance company). (Central Park near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 861-7277. July 10 at 8.)

DOUGLAS DUNN & DANCERS / AXIS DANCE TROUPE—Four dancers from the Dunn company appear in "Caracole," and the Axis Dance Troupe performs four works featuring dancers with and without disabilities. (Central Park SummerStage, Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. July 7 at 8:30. No tickets necessary.)

PILAR RIOJA—The twenty-third New York season for the Spanish dancer, whose program this year includes Andalusian and bolero-school variations on the traditional flamenco. (Repertorio Español, Gramercy Arts Theatre, 138 E. 27th St. 889-2850. July 5-7 at 8.)

CELEBRATE BROOKLYN FESTIVAL—Bill T. Jones / Arnie Zane dancer Andrea Woods appears in excerpts from her new work, "Ballad of the Black Cowboy," created in collaboration with composer David Pleasant. Choreographer Brenda Daniels will present "Sweet" and selections from "Flowers of Evil." (Prospect Park Bandshell, Prospect Park, Brooklyn. July 7 at 8. No tickets necessary. For more information about festival events, call 1-718 855-7882.)

UKRAINIAN DANCE—The forty dancers and musicians of the Tryzub ensemble, from Calgary, Alberta, perform folk ballets and dances (including the hopak, the acrobatic national dance) from the Poltavian, Transcarpathian, and Bukovynian regions of Ukraine. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. July 5 at 8.)

OUT OF TOWN

NEW YORK CITY BALLET—July 5 and July 7 at 8:15, and July 6 and July 8 at 2 and 8:15: "The Nutcracker." . . . ¶ July 11 at 8:15: "Walpurgisnacht Ballet," "Sinfonia," "Stravinsky Violin Concerto," and "The Four Seasons." (Saratoga Performing Arts Center, Saratoga Springs. 1-518 587-3330.)

JACOB'S PILLOW DANCE FESTIVAL—July 5 at 8, July 7 at 8:30, and July 8 at 2 and 8:30: Batsheva Dance Company. . . . ¶ July 5-6 at 6:30, July 7 at 8, July 8 at 5, and July 9 at 7: Paula Josa-Jones / Performance Works. . . . ¶ July 11 at 8: Parsons Dance Company. (Becket, Mass. For information about tickets, call 1-413 243-0745.)

NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

YANNI—With steamy titles like "Swept Away," "Until the Last Moment," and "Reflections of Passion," it's easy to see why this hirsute composer-keyboardist has become the Barbara Cartland of pop music. In the grand tradition of Liberace and Richard Clayderman, he plays music to swoon to. And he does it very, *very* well—his 1994 "Live at the Acropolis" CD and video sold so many copies that his arch-rival, John Tesh, was forced to respond with his own ungodly extravaganza. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. July 6-8 at 8.)

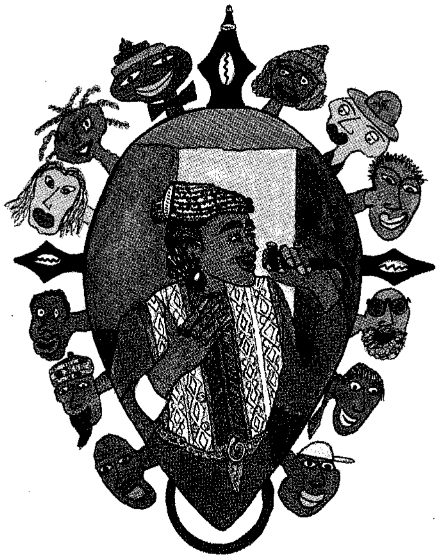
SAORI YUKI & SACHIKO YASUDA—Japanese singers. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. July 7 at 8.)

NATALIE COLE—Westbury Music Fair. 1-516 334-0800. July 7-8 at 8.

AFRICA FÊTE—The Senegalese singer Baaba Maal is the headliner—an excellent choice. Like his fellow-countryman Youssou N'Dour, Maal offers churning percussion and soaring, mystical imagery. Joining Maal (who appears on July 8) will be the Nigerian singer Femi Kuti. On July 9, the star of the show is Oumou Sangare, a twenty-six-year-old thrush who has been called the Madonna of Mali. Unlike Maal, Sangare performs music that is sedate and almost folkie: many of her songs have no percussion accompaniment at all. But her voice is an otherworldly thrill; to the untrained ear, Sangare's Wassoulou melodies have an almost Asian quality. When she lets fly one of her serpentine, earth-shattering phrases, you can almost hear the continents quake. The bumptious Haitian band Boukman Eksperyans is also on the program. (Central Park SummerStage, Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. No tickets necessary. July 8-9 at 3.)

"THE UNIVERSAL CONCERT"—A sixtieth-birthday party for the Dalai Lama (who will not be present), with music by Philip Glass and the Nechung monks. Richard Gere is not scheduled to appear, either. (Society for Ethical Culture, 2 W. 64th St. 874-5210. July 8 at 7.)

THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS—It's been a decade since John Flansburgh and John Linnell first performed jerky little pop songs while wearing improbably enormous masks. (They later observed that "everybody wants prosthetic foreheads on their real heads.") The Brooklyn-based duo have been unmasked for some time, but their jerky little pop songs—precociously crafted and full of surreal humor—flow unabated, as their infamous Dial-a-Song (1-718 387-6962) happily attests. With Skeleton Key, a local combo on its way to the big time. (Prospect Park Bandshell, Prospect Park, Brooklyn. For information, call 1-718 855-7882. July 9 at 3.)



Oumou Sangare, at this year's Africa Fête.

WILLIAM WILSON

THE NEW YORK POPS—Conductor Skitch Henderson leads the gang in a tribute to the American musical. (Damrosch Park, Lincoln Center. No tickets necessary. July 10 at 8.)

"A GRAND NIGHT FOR SINGING"—Presented by the Mabel Mercer Foundation. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. July 10-12 at 6.)

BARENAKED LADIES / BILLY BRAGG—The Ladies—actually they're five fully clothed Canadian guys—specialize in eccentrically folkie songs that are tender and funny, and cover such enduring (and endearing) subjects as life in the ninth grade. On the band's recent CD, "Maybe You Should Drive," the emotions are closer to the surface, and the production is lush—thanks to the presence of Ben Mink, k.d. lang's collaborator on "Ingénue." / After Communism collapsed, the blue-collar bard from Barking, East London switched from ideology to biology: his 1991 single, "Sexuality," was a paean to latex-coated lust. Fortunately, the globe continues to revolve, and Bragg remains the world's most entertaining socialist. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. July 10 at 8.)

THE LARRY CORYELL QUARTET—The jazz guitarist. (Bryant Park, Sixth Ave. at 42nd St. No tickets necessary. July 11 at 12:30.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it is advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

ALGONQUIN HOTEL, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Legendary songwriter **JIMMY WEBB** continues through July 8. **PHILLIP OFFICER** takes over for a month on July 11. Dining.

ARTHUR'S TAVERN, 57 Grove St. (675-6879)—Mondays belong to the Grove Street Stompers, Tuesdays through Thursdays to Al Bundy and Johnny Parker, Fridays and Saturdays to the Freddy Francis trio, and Sundays to Lee Lorenz and the Creole Cookin' Jazz Band.

BIRDLAND, 2745 Broadway, at 105th St. (749-2228)—Tapping into the contemporary wellspring created by Tyner, Hancock, and Evans, **JOANNE BRACKEEN** (July 7-8) has fashioned an engaging personal sound at the piano. Everything she touches, from American songbook standards and Brazilian melodies to her own modernist pieces, is stamped with jazz authority. Dining.

BLUE NOTE, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—This blue-on-blue club is an institution and knows it: how many other clubs sell their own belt buckles? Through July 9: Argentinean saxophonist **GATO BARBIERI.** Dining.

CAJUN, 129 Eighth Ave., at 16th St. (691-6174)—A New Orleans-style restaurant specializing in Dixieland and swing. On Fridays, catch the Canal Street Dixieland Jazz and Blues band. Saturdays belong to the New Atlantic Jazz band.

CARLYLE HOTEL, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—Pianist **PETER MINTUN** is in command at the Bemelmans Bar. A genuine throwback to a gentler time, this elegant performer specializes in curios from the twenties and thirties like "Kitten on the Keys," but he has also been known to play cartoon theme songs if the mood (or the crowd) warrants it. Agreeable and reassuring without being over-gracious, he's sort of a curio himself.

FAT TUESDAY'S, 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. (533-7900)—Through July 9: **JERRY WELDON** and his hard-bop quintet. Vocalist **LAVERNE BUTLER** takes over on July 11. On Mondays, guitarist-inventor **LES PAUL** leads a trio. Dining.

FEZ, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—The **MINGUS BIG BAND,** a fourteen-piece ensemble that concentrates exclusively on the tricky, cacophonous work of its catalyst, the late Charles Mingus, still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

FIFTY SEVEN FIFTY SEVEN, 57 E. 57th St. (758-5757)—A sleek piano-and-bass room in the Four Seasons Hotel. Thursdays through Sundays,

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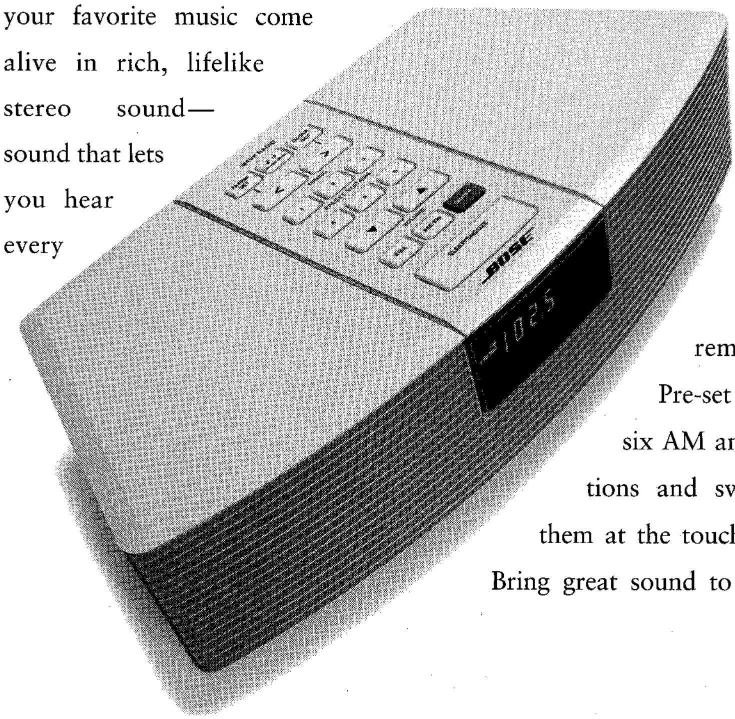

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DONALD JOHNSTON is the featured pianist; on Fridays and Saturdays he performs with a trio. Dining.

Five Spot, 4 W. 31st St. (631-0100)—July 7-8: Jazz violinist **REGINA CARTER.** Dining.

Iridium, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Across the street from Lincoln Center, this restaurant and club features a handsome bar upstairs and a surreal performance space downstairs. Through July 8: the **TEODROSS AVERY & LOSTON HARRIS** quartet. **GEOFF KEEZER** (in for a week beginning July 11) was around before the current crop of prodigious pianists arrived, and his dexterity and knowledge can still impress. With the Sonny Simmons trio. Dining.

Knickerbocker, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—An Old New York kind of place, with dark wood panelling, white tablecloths, and brass figurine lamps. July 5-8: Piano and bass with **ROY MERIWETHER** and **LYNN SEATON.** On Sundays and Mondays in July, actor and pianist **MICHAEL MORIARTY** is joined by bassist **JAY LEONHART.**

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Hungarian pianist **LASZLO GARDONY** performs on July 9.

Match, 160 Mercer St. (343-0020)—This hip SoHo *boîte* is the place to be every Sunday night, thanks to the **SHORTY JACKSON LEGACY BLUES BAND,** featuring the eighty-something chanteuse **LAUREL WATSON.** Dining.

Metronome, 915 Broadway, at 21st St. (505-7400)—In the shadow of the Flatiron Building, a cavernous, elegant restaurant that features live music every weekend.

Metropolis, 31 Union Sq. W. (675-2300)—A swank basement club, home to high-profile jazz combos. July 7-8: The **SPIRIT OF LIFE ENSEMBLE.** Tuesdays are given over to the **GEORGE GEE ORCHESTRA,** a seventeen-piece swing band.

Michael's Pub, 211 E. 55th St. (758-2272)—On Mondays, Woody Allen continues his night job as clarinet player in the **NEW ORLEANS FUNERAL AND RAGTIME ORCHESTRA,** a Dixieland-jazz ensemble. Closed Sundays.

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza (632-5000)—The great cabaret in the sky. The years have been a bit rough on **ANITA O'DAY** (in through July 15), but if you don't go expecting to hear the effusive girl who sang for Gene Krupa in the forties, then you'll appreciate the voice of a woman who can wring truth from the most syrupy of standards. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in the Rainbow Room, there's a revolving dance floor, plus swinging big-band music courtesy of the Rainbow Room Orchestra, featuring vocalists Michael Andrew and Claudette Sierra. Closed Mondays.

Red Blazer Too, 349 W. 46th St. (262-3112)—Thursdays belong to Stan Rubin's big band, Fridays to Lew Anderson's big band and Sam Ulano and the Bourbon Street Swingers, and Saturdays to Bob Cantwell and his Stompers.

Smalls, 183 W. 10th St. (929-7565)—This aptly named club features up-and-coming players jamming late into the night.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—A convivial and crowded jazz club where the musicians are always top-shelf. Through July 9: the **TERUMASA HINO** quintet. You can't play with as many heavyweights as drummer **BILLY HART** (in for a week on July 11) has and not learn a thing or two about leading a well-crafted band. Besides, Hart's own dashing percussion work is worth the price of admission. Dining.

Tavern on the Green, Central Park W. at 67th St. (873-3200)—The Chestnut Room may resemble a hunting lodge decorated by Liberace, but the performances here are no joke. Through July 9: vocalist **SARAH PARTRIDGE.** The **OLIVER JONES** trio swings by on July 11. Dining.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through July 9: the **JIMMY HEATH** quartet. **STANLEY TURRENTINE** takes over on July 11. You judge a tenor player like Turrentine not by his virtuosity or his ideas, but by his sound: a gritty, soulful calling card. He recently pledged new allegiance to his jazz roots, and, cleansed of his pop-funk pandering, he's now making quite a show of himself. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

Visiones, 125 Macdougal St., at W. 3rd St. (673-5576)—Saxophonist **WILLIE WILLIAMS** (July 5) is a graduate of Arthur Taylor's informal jazz school—in other words, he swings. He has a tough, taut sound that can pierce a club's walls. July 6: **JEFF WILLIAMS** quintet. Tenor man **SAM NEWSOME** (July 7-8), a Terence Blanchard alum, is one of the brighter lights on the scene, and he makes each set a celebration of luxurious tone and captivating skill.

Zinno, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—A rarity among jazz clubs: somewhere you'd go to eat even if there were no music. July 7-8: Piano and bass with **LARRY WILLIS** and **MICKEY BASS.**

TABLES FOR TWO

Dining Around Town

Jean Claude, 137 Sullivan St. (475-9232)—As the only restaurant in SoHo that serves nouvelle cuisine for the price of a Ten-Pak, Jean Claude might be the poor man's Bouley. But in many respects, Jean Claude *is* Bouley. The owner, Jean-Claude Iacovelli, a scruffy thirty-two-year-old Parisian who bears a striking resemblance to Kevin Kline in "French Kiss," used to be the captain at Bouley, where he mastered the art of making you feel loved and important even as he was making you wait. His head chef, William Prunty, apprenticed at the exalted Tribeca landmark himself, and when Jean-Claude left Bouley to open his own place he brought Prunty along and encouraged the young chef to cut loose in the kitchen. Now the twenty-eight-year-old former drummer from Staten Island has become the Buddy Rich of butcher block.

Take for instance his signature arborio-rice crust. The grain traditionally used for risotto is pulverized in a coffee grinder and makes a wonderfully crisp breading, especially good on delicate fillets of skate that seem to levitate above a psychedelic pattern of artichoke, basil emulsion, and balsamic citrus sauce. Prunty's Staten Island childhood may have something to do with his genius for seafood. Slices of flaky monkfish are served on asparagus and mashed potatoes; seared scallops get sandwiched between slices of juicy roasted beet; mussel soup radiates saffron and Thai chile oil.

With the money you save, you can choose something extravagant from the wine list, or have dinner again the next night, at Café Lure, Jean-Claude's other bistro, up the block. (Open daily for dinner; the kitchen closes at 11. Entrées $12-$14.)

ROCK, ETC.

Bar d'O, 29 Bedford St. (627-1580)—Low sofas, moderne ottomans, and venetian blinds make this mirrored living room the perfect spot for late-night love; the joint is named after Pauline Réage's heroine. Most nights, the music is up-to-the-minute seventies, but Tuesdays and Sundays, gender channeller **JOEY ARIAS** sets the ceiling fans awhirl.

Blarney Star, 43 Murray St. (732-2873)—Home to fine Irish music every Friday night.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—July 8: **AL STEWART.** 1977 was a good year for Stewart. It was, of course, "The Year of the Cat," and the wispy Scottish singer had himself a big hit. His follow-up, "Time Passages" (1978) was another big hit, but after that, time, as Stewart presciently observed, passed and passed and passed. July 11: **5 CHINESE BROTHERS.** This band formed more than a decade ago at Columbia University, and they've since become local heroes. Think Squeeze or Crowded House, only louder, looser, bluesier—more American.

Brownies, 169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (429-8392)—July 7: Loud rock with **MOTEL SHOOTOUT.** July 8: Louder rock with **CHAVEZ.**

CBGB & OMFUG, 315 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (982-4052)—A narrow, graffiti-strewn cave packed every evening with new and used bands. June 8: **HARDVARK.** . . . ¶ Next door, the neat and comfortable testament to gentrification called CB's Gallery plays host to **WILLIAM HOOKER** on July 8.

Chicago B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—July 7-8: The flashy, Texas-style blues of **GUITAR SHORTY** and his band.

Continental Divide, 25 Third Ave., at St. Marks Pl. (529-6924)—Hipsters, punks, poseurs, N.Y.U. students, the occasional skinhead—a typical East Village bar. Live music nightly.

The Cooler, 416 W. 14th St. (229-0785)—A lavender and stainless-steel vault deep in the heart of the meat district. The **GROOVE COLLECTIVE** is in the house on July 5. Tuesday nights are given over to experimental d.j. spinoffs.

Don Hill's, 511 Greenwich St., at Spring St. (219-2850)—A tidy little SoHo bar with an above-average P.A. system and topnotch local bands on the docket. . . . ¶ Soul Kitchen, the original seventies funk and R. & B. party, goes down (late) every Monday. . . . ¶ Friday night is Squeeze Box, a vinyl-and-velvet gay glamfest, hosted by Mistress Formika.

Duplex, 61 Christopher St., at Seventh Ave. (255-5438)—Everyone is a star here—the pianist, the bartender, the waiters, and the audience. The fabulous **DRESSING ROOM DIVAS** entertain every Friday night.

Fez, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—July 8: The **INNOCENCE MISSION.** July 10: **ALEX CHILTON.** Is he the most underrated or the most overrated artist in the history of rock and roll? It's a question that remains unanswered about the man from Memphis who (as a high-school sophomore) put the gravel into the Box Tops' classic, "The Letter." Over the past three decades, he's been the leader of Big Star, the Cramps' producer, a dishwasher, and the subject of a Replacements song; these days, he seems content to cut records that showcase his sardonic approach to blues, rockabilly, country, and R. & B. (his latest is "A Man Called Destruction"). Like any self-respecting cult hero, Chilton can be a surly pill who occasionally disses his worshipful audience with a lousy show. But the risk is worth it—he's the closest thing we have to a one-man time line of American pop. Dining.

Flannery's, 205 W. 14th St. (929-9589)—A well-scrubbed, amiable Irish pub with many of the classic features (pints of Guinness, non-stop TV sports) and a few of the near-classics (a CD jukebox, a portrait of Elvis).

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—This sprawling two-floor establishment has been all things to all people: meeting hall, rock club, jazz club, Off Broadway theatre. July 10: The **PRODIGY.** . . . ¶ The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday. The dancers share a passion for the Lindy Hop, a dance that involves a lot of whirling and the occasional display of underwear. Sets from eight until midnight. For information on the society, call 696-9737.

Kaptain Banana, 101 Greene St. (343-9000)—Female impersonator **JOEY ARIAS** performs Wednesdays through Fridays. Dining.

LIMELIGHT, Sixth Ave. at 20th St. (807-7850)—The rock-and-roll church. July 11: **NITZER EBB.** Wednesday night is Disco 2000, a fin-de-siècle blowout.

LUDLOW STREET CAFÉ, 165 Ludlow St. (353-0536)—A modest belowstairs room that looks like a spruced-up tenement apartment. Mondays belong to **BEAT RODEO,** a straight-shooting bar band that plays a mixture of country, blues, Dylan, Byrds, Velvets, and various pop curiosities.

MAXWELL'S, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken (1-201 798-4064)—Romance awaits! Meet your date at the World Trade Center and hold hands on the PATH as it burrows its way under the Hudson to Hoboken, the burg that gave the world baseball and Ol' Blue Eyes. July 6: **GARDEN VARIETY.**

MERCURY LOUNGE, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—July 10: **SUSAN MC KEOWAN & THE CHANTING HOUSE.** July 11: **CAKE.**

PADDY REILLY'S MUSIC BAR, 519 Second Ave., at 29th St. (686-1210)—**BLACK 47** usually plays on Saturdays, and Speir Mor (Gaelic for Big Sky) performs for a hearty following on Fridays. Séisiún—a traditional Irish jam—is on Thursday nights.

LES POULETS, 16 W. 22nd St. (229-2000)—The name may be French, but the music here is Latin: expect salsa, merengue, and the occasional cha-cha. Dining.

RODEO BAR, 375 Third Ave., at 27th St. (683-6500)—Sunday evenings usually belong to the **FLYING NEUTRINOS,** a New Orleans jazz band led by cousins Ingrid Lucia and Todd Lundagin. Lucia's lowdown singing, sassy patter, and mischievous grin are a lot like Billie Holiday's, and Lundagin plays trombone, tap-dances, and has a disarming Chet Baker-style voice.

ROSELAND, 239 W. 52nd St. (247-0200)—Ballroom dancing on Thursdays and Sundays. The rest of the week it's another dark, sweaty rock club. July 10: **MOTÖRHEAD** and **BLACK SABBATH.** The last time we saw Motörhead, several devoted young fans were enjoying the show by pressing their ears against the speakers. It's been fourteen years since Ozzy Osborne left Black Sabbath, and the band has now gone through so many lead singers that if you stay long enough after the show, chances are they'll offer you the job.

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RADIO WEST 43RD STREET

Songs from our own hit parade.

PEACE AND LOVE (Neil Young with Pearl Jam, "Mirror Ball").

INTO THE BLUE (Moby, "Everything Is Wrong").

SOMEBODY'S CRYING (Chris Isaak, "Forever Blue").

ONE OF US (Joan Osborne, "Relish").

SAN DIEGO ZOO (The 6ths, "Wasps' Nests").

DEEP SEA DIVING SUIT (The Magnetic Fields, "Holiday").

HOLD ME, THRILL ME, KISS ME, KILL ME (U2, "Original Music from the Motion Picture 'Batman Forever' ").

FAKE PLASTIC TREES (Radiohead, "The Bends").

SHALLOW (Billy Pilgrim, "Bloom").

CONNECTION (Elastica, "Elastica").

HEY MAN NICE SHOT (Filter, "Short Bus").

ROTTWEILER BLUES (Warren Zevon, "Mutineer").

OVERCOME (Tricky, "Maxinquaye").

FARSIGHTED (Jack Logan, "Bulk").

HERE AND NOW (Del Amitri, "Twisted").

CONGO SQUARE (Sonny Landreth, "South of I-10").

ARMY OF ME (Björk, "Post").

THE WAITING (Linda Ronstadt, "Feels Like Home").

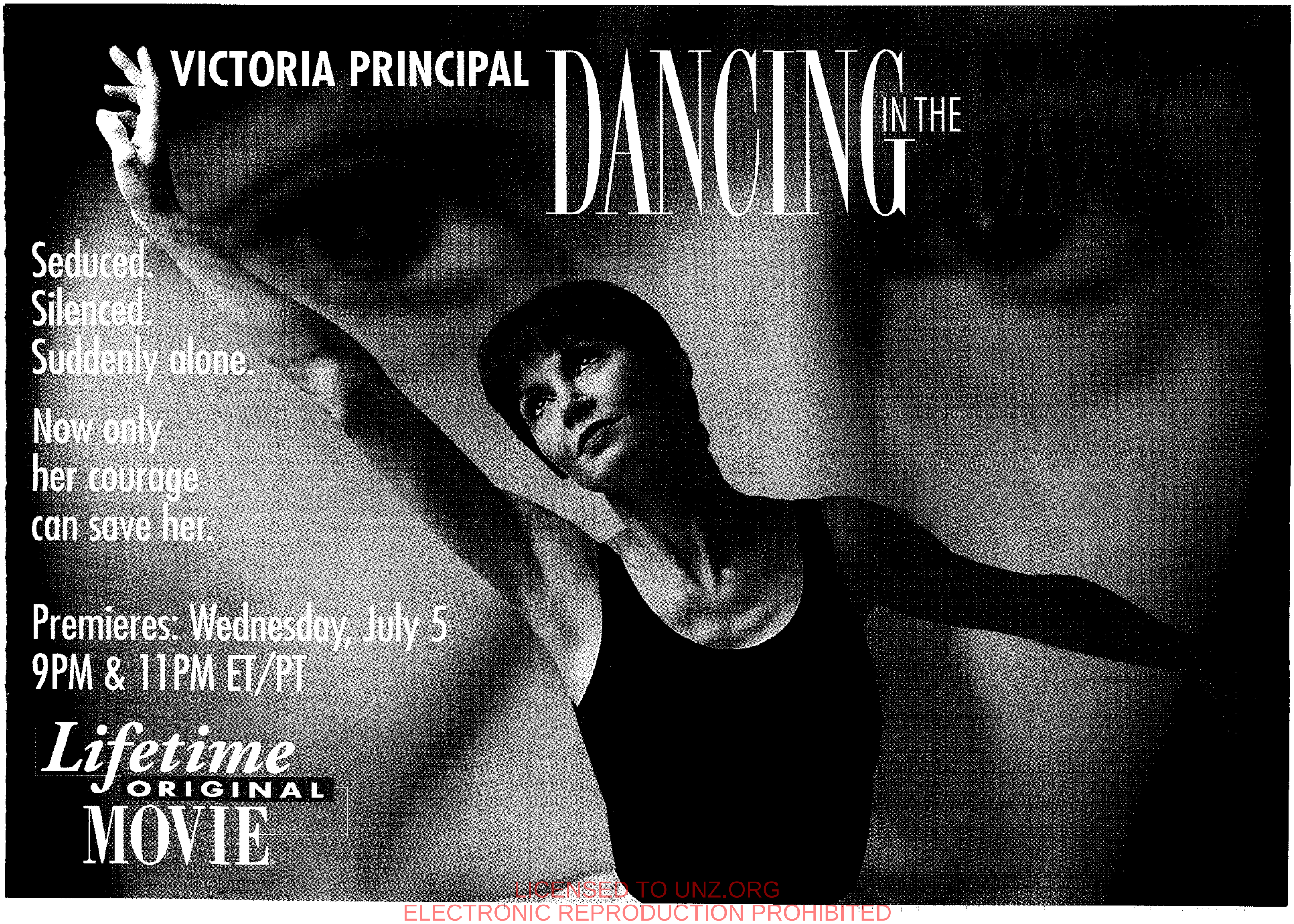
NOT WHEN I NEED IT (Matthew Sweet, "100% Fun").

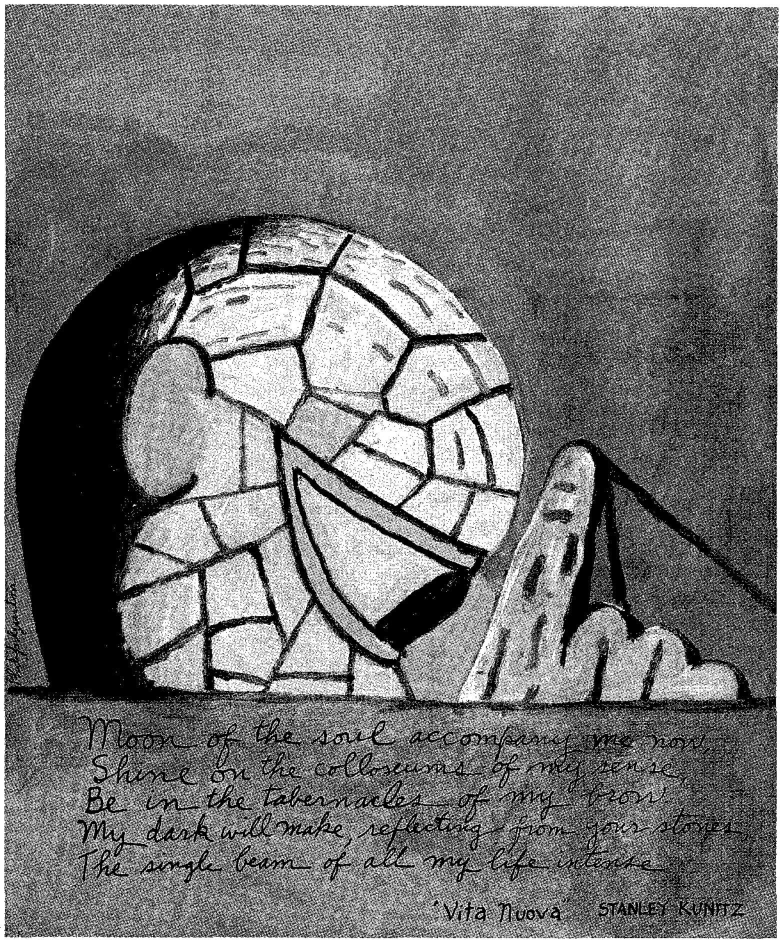
S.O.B.'S, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—A great grass hut with a fruit-and-bamboo motif, dedicated to calypso, reggae, and the bossa nova. African-music fanatics who aren't satisfied with the lineup at Africa Fête (see Concerts) might drop by on July 5, when **THOMAS MAPFUMO** performs the music of Zimbabwe. July 8: **TABU LEY ROCHEREAU** weighs in from Zaire. Dining.

TRAMPS, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—This spacious and agreeable club offers a consistent lineup of A-list talent. July 7: **JOHNNY RIVERS.** "Go-go" wasn't in the dictionary back when Rivers headlined at the brand new Whiskey-a-Go-Go, on L.A.'s Sunset Strip. With hits like "Memphis," "Seventh Son," and "Mountain of Love," Rivers helped define the spirited mix of rock, R. & B., and soul that was sixties go-go music. If you need further proof, try sitting still when you hear the classic opening riff from "Secret Agent Man." July 8: Reggae with **TOOTS AND THE MAYTALS.**

WEBSTER HALL, 125 E. 11th St. (353-1600)—A byzantine disco wonderland with four floors, a coffee shop, and a wig boutique. Wednesday is drag night. Psychedelic Thursdays feature grunge acts and cheap beer.

WETLANDS, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—July 5-6: The bluejeans-and-tie-dye sounds of **GOD STREET WINE.** Perhaps the finest collection of youngsters devoted to the music and paraphernalia of the seventies—a decade the band actually experienced through a filter of "Sesame Street" and elementary school—God Street Wine is also one of the first groups to use the Internet to develop a huge fan base, an idea that recently paid off in the shape of "$1.99 Romances," the band's major-label début. July 7: The **NIAGARAS.**




Moon of the soul accompany me now
Shine on the colloseums of my sense
Be in the tabernacles of my brow
My dark will make, reflecting from your stones,
The single beam of all my life intense
'Vita Nuova
STANLEY KUNITZ

"Untitled (from 'Vita Nuova')," a collaboration between Philip Guston and Stanley Kunitz (Drawing Center).

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—"Art and Empire: Treasures from Assyria in the British Museum." The booty from Austen Henry Layard's spectacular excavations at Nineveh and Nimrud in the eighteen-forties landed in the British Museum, and for the most part it remained there until this splendid loan exhibition. A series of superbly rendered low-relief stone carvings possess Homeric narrative power and irresistible charm; in one, which shows soldiers swimming across the Euphrates to escape Assyrian archers, the trees on the bank are as vivid as Matisse cutouts. The freshest, most beautiful piece is a small ivory panel inlaid with gold, lapis lazuli, and carnelian, which depicts a man being devoured by a lion. A room devoted to Layard himself contains some Mesopotamian jewelry that the archeologist gave his wife, and it's as illuminating about the Victorians as the great carvings are about the Assyrians. A small companion exhibit, "Assyrian Origins," displays early objects from the collection of the Vorderasiatisches Museum, in Berlin. Both shows through Aug. 13. . . . ¶ A major exhibition of work by the great French photographer Nadar (1820-1910). Like Andy Warhol, Nadar formed a surrogate family out of his fellow bohemians. In addition to capturing underground characters, he shot underground Paris itself: the catacombs, with their skeletons, their sewers, their haunting chiaroscuro expanses. And he was obsessed with hot-air balloons and flying machines. The prominent Parisians who sat for him included Berlioz, Delacroix, and Dumas *père*. Particularly fascinating are the images, including physiological experiments and Pierrots, that Nadar's younger brother had a hand in. Through July 9. . . . ¶ "Herter Brothers: Furniture and Interiors for a Gilded Age." Fifty works by the preëminent nineteenth-century cabinetmaking and decorating firm; in conjunction with "Decorating the American Home, 1850-1900," which includes furnishings, pattern books, and catalogues. Both shows through July 30. . . . ¶ A display of more than a hundred painted-glass roundels produced in the European Lowlands between 1480 and 1560. Through Aug. 13. . . . NOTE: The museum's roof garden is open, when weather permits. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, 11 W. 53rd St.—"Video Spaces: Eight Installations," recent work by Judith Barry and Brad Miskell, Stan Douglas, Teiji Furuhashi, Gary Hill, Chris Marker, Marcel Odenbach, Tony Oursler, and Bill Viola. Through Sept. 12. . . . ¶ "Artist's Choice: Elizabeth Murray." A large show of paintings, sculptures, drawings, and prints by seventy female artists, including Frida Kahlo, Agnes Martin, Louise Bourgeois, Georgia O'Keeffe, Joan Mitchell, and Eva Hesse. Through Aug. 22. . . . ¶ Ten black-and-white photographs by Gilles Peress documenting the massacres and the refugee camps in Rwanda and Zaire. Through Aug. 1. . . . ¶ Ceramic razor blades, a carbon-fiber airplane, and titanium eyeglass frames are a few of the more than two hundred objects in "Mutant Materials in Contemporary Design." Through Aug. 27. . . . ¶ The latest in the "projects" series is a video work and an installation by the performance artist Paul McCarthy. Through July 18. . . . ¶ "Masterworks from the Louise Reinhardt Smith Collection," thirty-six paintings, drawings, and sculptures by, among others, Kandinsky, Picasso, Monet, Seurat, Braque, Degas, and Moore. Through Aug. 22. . . . ¶ "Designing Magic: Disney Animation Art" features more than three hundred drawings, paintings, cels, and other objects showing the studio's progress from "Steamboat Willie" to "Pocahontas." Through Sept. 12. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 8:30.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—A large survey of paintings by the German Neo-Expressionist Georg Baselitz. Through Sept. 17. . . . ¶ "Josef Albers: Glass, Color, and Light," a show of paintings on glass, glass constructions, oil paintings, and rarely exhibited photographs. Through Sept. 17. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM SOHO, 575 Broadway—A survey of Gary Hill's oeuvre, in which room after darkened room offers video works of technical finesse and strange, even ravishing beauty. In "Searchlight," for example, a motorized cylinder, which beams an image of an ocean horizon onto the opposite wall, slowly moves from side to side; as the projector approaches the limit of its range, the circular image stretches into a ghostly ellipse, with the sound of waves providing a mournful counterpoint. Through Aug. 20. . . . ¶ Twenty-five paintings, sculptures, photographs, and installations are on view in "Antipodean Currents: Ten Contemporary Artists from Australia." Through Aug. 6. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Saturday evenings until 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—"Edward Hopper and the American Imagination," a selection of sixty-five paintings intended to explore his sensibility rather than illustrate his themes or artistic development. Works are hung in groups accompanied by passages from writers that Hopper admired, including Emerson, Frost, and E. B. White. . . . ¶ In the new series "Views from Abroad: European Perspectives on American Art," guest curators from European institutions will organize shows using works from the Whitney's collection and from their own museums' holdings. The first installment is curated by Rudi Fuchs, the director of the Stedelijk Museum, in Amsterdam. (Open Wednesdays and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM, Eastern Parkway—"The Pictographs of Adolph Gottlieb," a series of sixty gridded paintings with Native American, Freudian, Joycean, and other imagery, in free-associative compositions. Through Aug. 27. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

ASIA SOCIETY, Park Ave. at 70th St.—Monkeys acting like humans, monkeys in their natural state, and monkeys as divine figures: these images grace sculptures, prints, and objects from India, Southeast Asia, Tibet, China, and Japan in a show called . . . "Monkey." Through Sept. 10. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8; Sundays, noon to 5.)

FRICK COLLECTION, 1 E. 70th St.—"The Golden Age of Danish Art: Drawings from the Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Copenhagen." Seventy-five works from the first half of the nineteenth century, including sketches and studies by Nikolai Abildgaard, Jens Juel, and Christoffer Wihelm Eckersberg. Through Aug. 13. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Sundays, 1 to 6.)

JEWISH MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St.—"Camille Pissarro: Impressionist Innovator" includes many of the artist's landscapes, figure paintings, family portraits, and Japonism-inspired design experiments. Through July 16. . . . ¶ "Women Photographers of the Weimar Republic," late-twenties and thirties works by Lucia Moholy, Lotte Jacobi, Hannah Höch, Florence Henri, and others. Through July 30. (Open Sundays through Thursdays, 11 to 5:45, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

MORGAN LIBRARY, 29 E. 36th St.—"Auld Acquaintances: Famous Music from the James

Fuld Collection." More than two hundred items, including first editions of Bach's "Goldberg" Variations and Beethoven's "Moonlight" Sonata. Through Aug. 27. . . . ¶ "Animals as Symbol in Medieval Illuminated Manuscripts." Through Sept. 3. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10:30 to 5; Saturdays, 10:30 to 6; Sundays, noon to 6.)

Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 104th St.—"Play Ball: From Stickball to Baseball." Getcha trophies, bleacher seats, World Series balls, bats, and yearbooks heah. Through Aug. 20. . . . ¶ Twenty neighborhood, subway, restaurant, and skyline scenes are on view in "New York Now: Contemporary Cityscape Paintings." . . . ¶ "Curating New York: The Legacy of Grace M. Mayer," a tribute to the museum's first curator of prints and photographs. . . . ¶ "A Century Apart: Images of Struggle & Spirit, Jacob Riis and Five Contemporary Photographers." Documents of the city's poor by the nation's first photojournalist, alongside work on similar themes by Martine Barrat, Mary Ellen Mark, Margaret Morton, Jeffrey Henson Scales, and Fred R. Conrad. Through Sept. 3. (Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St.—"Writers in Wartime: Looking at World War II," a selection of diaries, letters, first editions, and working proofs by Mann, Auden, Woolf, Hellman, Steinbeck, Kerouac, and others. (Berg Collection. Closed Mondays.) . . . ¶ "What Price Freedom" features twenty objects, from a Jefferson draft of the Declaration of Independence to a student handbill distributed in Tiananmen Square. (Gottesman Exhibition Hall.) . . . ¶ Part one of "The Collecting Adventure, 1895-1995" examines the way the library has documented and preserved avant-garde and pop culture. Through Sept. 1. (Salomon Room.) . . . ¶ The librarians have chosen a hundred and fifty books, ranging from rare editions to dog-eared paperbacks, as the "Books of the Century." (Third Floor Gallery.) (Open Mondays, and Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 6.)

Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum, 32-37 Vernon Blvd., at 33rd Road, Long Island City—With its twelve galleries and peaceful, ivy-walled center garden, this museum is an oasis for more than two hundred and fifty of the artist's sculptures. (Open Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

Queens Museum of Art, Flushing Meadow Park—"The View from Within: Japanese American Art from the Internment Camps, 1942-45." Paintings by amateur and professional artists, who often had only sheets, pillowcases, or potato sacks to use as canvases. Through July 16. . . . ¶ A conceptual installation titled "Project Article 9," by Yukinori Yanagi, a young artist who has a concurrent show at Blum, 99 Wooster St. Through July 16. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 5.)

Studio Museum in Harlem, 144 W. 125th St.—"Mothers, Fathers, and Legendary Ancestors: Selections of Classical African Sculpture," more than ninety works from the museum's holdings and from private collections. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Mondays through Fridays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

Robert Andrew Parker—A retrospective of watercolors and drawings, accompanied by stories and accounts of dreams. Through July 14. (Dintenfass, 50 W. 57th St.)

Short List—**mark metcalf,** Associated American Artists, 20 W. 57th St. Through July 21. . . . **david row,** Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St. Through July 28. . . . **emiel verraneman,** Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. Through July 7. . . . **rolf walz,** Baron-Boisanté, 50 W. 57th St. Closed Mondays; through July 7.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Alexander Calder (1898-1976)—Brass and silver jewelry from the thirties through the fifties, along with serpentine line drawings in ink. Through July 28. (A/D, 560 Broadway.)

Lesley Dill—A collaboration between the artist and Dieu Donné Papermill has produced an eight-foot-tall paper dress that features a rather abstract rendering in wire of an eight-line Emily Dickinson poem. Through July 15. (Dieu Donné, 433 Broome St. Closed Mondays; open Saturdays.)

Philip Guston (1913-80)—"Poem-Pictures," a series of drawings with verse, from the seventies, when the artist abandoned Abstract Expressionism. It makes a nice counterpoint to the recent show, at McKee, of his fifties abstractions. Through July 28. (The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. Closed Mondays; open Saturdays, and Wednesday evenings until 8.)

Peter Halley / Ettore Sottsass—Neo-Geo abstractionist Halley had the smart idea of pairing his latest paintings, which combine a modernist reductionism and a brazenly vulgar pop sensibility, with furniture and ceramics by the Italian innovator Sottsass, creator of the infamous eighties style known as Memphis. Several pieces in this show are pure Memphis in their kitschy grandiosity. Design enthusiasts, however, may be more intrigued by some of Sottsass's earlier work, which is represented here by ceramics dating back to 1959. Through July 28. (Gorney, 100 Greene St. Closed Mondays.)

Yukinori Yanagi—Two visual stunners. "Crysanthemum Carpet" (a reference to Japan's imperial crest) features a sumptuous red carpet strewn with sixteen brass petals and embroidered with translations, in thirteen Asian languages, of the phrase "s/he loves me, s/he loves me not." Above it, there's a photo-silkscreen of MacArthur and Hirohito. In "Asia-Pacific Ant Farm," the artist has assembled a hanging grid of forty-two Plexiglass boxes full of colored sand—each representing the flag of a different nation. Live ants travel from flag to flag through tiny plastic tubes, eroding the compositions a grain at a time. Through July 29. (Blum, 99 Wooster St. . . . ¶ A concurrent show of Yanagi's work is at the Queens Museum of Art.)

"The Moderns"—Tony Payne definitely wasn't thinking of Picasso and Braque when he curated this large and rather loosely conceived group show. Sex—especially in its more unconventional and/or lurid forms—is the running theme. The legend on a small 1985 Andy Warhol painting of a man with a star on his forehead queries "ARE YOU DIFFERENT?"; given the preponderance of male nudity, S. & M. shenanigans, and cross-dressing, the answer is "In this context, no." Recreational drug use provides an occasional thematic chaser. Through July 28. (Feature, 76 Greene St. Closed Mondays and July 5.)

"Bloom"—When in doubt, paint a flower. Horticultural themes are popular with artists, from the sublime (Manet, Fantin-Latour, Redon) down to the nameless venders of kitsch. "Bloom" includes its share of name artists (Ross Bleckner, Peter Campus, Adam Fuss), who all contribute predictably pretty works. The show's highlight is by the performance artist Karen Finley: an innocuous, impressionistically rendered bouquet of irises bearing the text "I drink myself to death because I love you but I love my liquor more." Through July 29. (Cristinerose, 395 West Broadway. Opens Saturdays at noon.)

"Summer Fling"—As the art season winds down, group shows that are often little more than filler start to take over. This summer Stefano Basilico is trying to up the ante by asking his gallery's artists to select partners from outside the gallery for weeklong projects. One artist has to set up a show before the gallery opens for business on Tuesday; the other then has forty-eight hours to respond to the exhibition in any way he or she sees fit. The idea could lead to some smart fun during the summer doldrums. Through July 28. (Basilico Fine Arts, 26 Wooster St. Closed Mondays.)

Short List—**bryan hunt,** Gagosian, 136 Wooster St. Through July 14. . . . **barry le va,** Sonnabend, 420 West Broadway. Closed Mondays; through July 28. . . . **fred sandback,** Markey, 55 Vandam St., between Varick and Hudson Sts. Closed Mondays and July 5; through July 14. . . . **julian schnabel,** Shafrazi, 119 Wooster St. Through July 14. . . . **hunt slonem,** Lannon, 530 W. 22nd St. Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6, and Sundays, noon to 6; through July 22.

OTHER VENUES

Socrates Sculpture Park—"Pop-up," new works with Pop influences, including Michael Tong's giant Buddha head, made from rusting steel plates, and Karin Giusti's hundred-and-fifty-foot strand of giant "pearls," complete with hydraulic oyster. Also on view are pieces by Gunilla Bandolin, Alberto Riaño, Barbara Grygutis, and Nancy Rubins. Through Sept. 17. (Broadway at Vernon Blvd., Long Island City. Open daily, 10 to sunset.)

Sculpture Center at Roosevelt Island—A mostly outdoor installation of works by six artists. Heather Nicol's "Pick Me," a collection of altered and illuminated prom gowns hanging from the ceiling of an atrium, is a coup de théâtre. Through Nov. 15. (North end of Main St. For information, call 832-4540.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

International Center of Photography—Candid photographs of celebrities and other subjects, by Ruth Orkin (1921-85). Through July 16. . . . ¶ "PhotoDiary," forty large-format pictures of musicians, by Lynn Goldsmith. Through July 16. . . . ¶ "Lucky Strikes," photos by Toby Old of the late-seventies disco scene, the boxing world, county fairs, and other often bizarre communities. Through July 16. (1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

International Center of Photography Midtown—"An American Century of Photography: From Dry-Plate to Digital—The Hallmark Photographic Collection." Two hundred works by both well-known photographers (including Stieglitz, Weston, Strand, and Steiner) and less familiar ones. Through Sept. 10. . . . ¶ "Eyes on an Era," works from the thirties through the sixties by photojournalist Irving Haberman. Through Sept. 10. (Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

"Faces"—Not portraits, but candid glimpses of people walking, working, relaxing, etc., by Levitt, Evans, Friedlander, Weegee, Klien, Winogrand, and others. Through July 27. (Seagram Building, 375 Park Ave., at 52nd St., fourth floor. Open Mondays through Thursdays, 9 to 5; Fridays, 9 to 1.)

Short List—**john batho,** Zabriskie, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Through Aug. 31. . . . **john brill,** Kent, 67 Prince St. Through July 28. . . . **kevin bubriski,** National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park S. Open Tuesdays, 2 to 6, and Wednesdays through Sundays, 12 to 6; through July 9. . . . **bruce cratsley,** A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St. Open daily, 10 to midnight; through July 31. . . . **herbert matter,** Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway. Closed Mondays; through Sept. 2. . . . **arno rafael minkkinen,** Houk Friedman, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St. Closed Mondays; through July 14. . . . **david noble,** Witkin, 415 West Broadway. Through July 7. . . . **jo ann verburg,** Mann, 42 E. 76th St. Through Aug. 18. . . . **randy west,** Richardson, 560 Broadway. Through July 7. . . . **brett weston,** Burden, 20 E. 23rd St. Closed Mondays, open Saturdays; through July 29.

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, the Jewish Museum, and the Museum of the City of New York.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

Meanwhile, Back at the Manse

Benjamin Britten's "The Turn of the Screw" can get under your skin. Written in 1954 to a libretto based on Henry James's spooky novella, it proved a perfect marriage of composer and subject. The plot advanced Britten's obsession with the corruption of innocence (already explored in "Peter Grimes," "The Rape of Lucretia," "Albert Herring," and "Billy Budd"), but here the unnerving effect is intensified through ambiguity. Some characters are revealed only fleetingly; certain details of the action are suggestive rather than specific; the drama seems to oscillate between reality and delusion, eluding definitive interpretation. Britten's score revels in ambiguity, too, alluding to twelve-tone procedures while preserving the momentum of more traditional harmony. The result is a masterpiece of contradiction, an opera at once colorful and claustrophobic, seductive and terrifying. A four-performance run of "The Turn of the Screw" opens on July 7th at the Opera Festival of New Jersey. The matinée two days later is especially alluring, since it will be followed by a roundtable discussion featuring literary and musical thinkers who have fallen under the work's spell.

OPERA

Opera Manhattan—Gabriel Guimarães leads stagings of single acts from three French operas that flaunt their Anglo-Saxon sympathies: Ernest Reyer's "Sigurd," written in 1884, only six years after Wagner's "Götterdämmerung," whose plot it echoes; Ernest Chausson's "Le Roi Arthus" (1895), a tale of Guinevere and Lancelot in Camelot; and Albéric Magnard's "Guercoeur" (1901), a "Parsifal"-esque spiritual opera. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. July 10 at 8. For information about tickets, call 799-1660.)

"I Was Looking at the Ceiling and Then I Saw the Sky"—A theatre piece with music by John Adams. (John Jay Theatre, 899 Tenth Ave., at 58th St. July 11 at 8. For information about tickets, call 875-5050. Through July 16.)

CONCERTS

Bargemusic—July 6 at 7:30 and July 9 at 4: Violinist Mark Peskanov, violist Yuri Vodovoz, and cellist Nathaniel Rosen perform Mozart's Divertimento in E-Flat Major (K. 563); pianist Leonid Kuzmin joins them for Schumann's Piano Quartet. . . . ¶ July 7 at 6:30: The week's string players, plus Olga Bloom (Bargemusic's founder, and an accomplished violinist), offer a glimpse at how chamber-music performances come together, through an "open reading" of quartets by Mozart and Dvořák. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061.)

MOMA Summergarden—Musicians from the Juilliard School perform American chamber works that stress percussion instruments, by Carter, Cage, Donald Erb, Steve Reich, and William Kraft. (Sculpture Garden, Museum of Modern Art, 14 W. 54th St. July 7-8 at 8:30. No tickets necessary.)

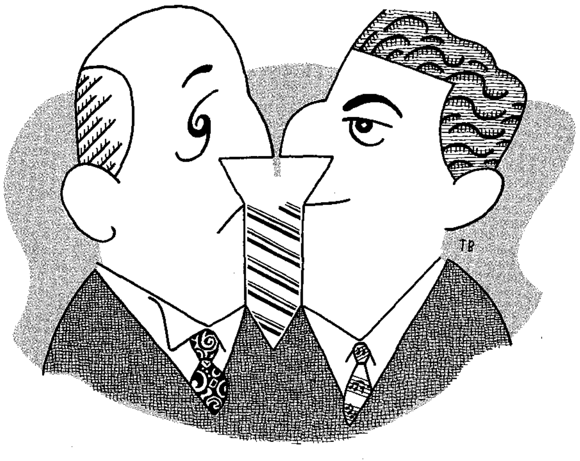
Bronx Baroque—Music by Bach, Handel, and Telemann, played by violinist Anton Miller, cellist Iris Regev, and harpsichordist Ilan Rechtman. (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 1-718 885-2478. July 9 at noon.)

Salon Soirée—Violinist Anton Miller and pianist Ilan Rechtman perform sonatas by Mozart (in E Minor, K. 304) and Beethoven (his Sixth). (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. July 9 at 6 and 8. No tickets necessary.)

Jupiter Symphony—In a program that includes Mozart's F-Major Piano Concerto (K. 459, with David Buechner) and two of his concert arias (with mezzo-soprano Laura Tucker). (North Lawn, Hudson River Park, Battery Park City. July 11 at 6:30. No tickets necessary.)

OUT OF TOWN

Caramoor—July 6 at 4:15: Pianist Stella Simakova. . . . ¶ July 7 at 8:30: The St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble performs Dvořák's Bagatelles (Op. 47) and premières pieces by Deborah Drattell (featuring soprano Angelina Réaux, who also presents cabaret music from interwar Berlin). . . . ¶ July 8 at 8:30: Julius Rudel leads the Orchestra of St. Luke's in Mozart's Cassation in B-Flat Major (K. 99), Sinfonia Concertante (K. 364, with violinist Pamela Frank and violist Paul Neubauer), and Symphony No. 41. . . . ¶ July 9 at 5:30: The Orchestra of St. Luke's in an all-Bach program. (Katonah, N.Y. 1-914 232-1252.)



Henry James and Benjamin Britten: "The Turn of the Screw," at the Opera Festival of New Jersey.

Opera Festival of New Jersey—July 6 at 8: "Rigoletto." . . . ¶ July 8 at 8: "The Elixir of Love," in English. . . . ¶ July 7 at 8 and July 9 at 3: "The Turn of the Screw," with soprano Jane Thorngren and tenor Robert Baker. . . . **Note:** On July 9 at 6, following the matinée performance, author Joyce Carol Oates, Henry James specialist John Warner, and Britten scholar Philip Brett will participate in a symposium. (The Lawrenceville School, Lawrenceville, N.J. 1-609 936-1500.)

Tanglewood—July 6 at 8:30: The Boston Camerata performs music from the medieval "Carmina Burana." . . . ¶ July 7 at 8:30: Seiji Ozawa conducts the Boston Symphony in symphonic excerpts from Wagner's "Tannhäuser," works by Granados (with soprano Kathleen Battle), and Orff's "Carmina Burana" (with Ms. Battle, tenor John Aler, baritone Bo Skovhus, and the Tanglewood Festival Chorus). . . . ¶ July 8 at 8:30: John Williams leads the Boston Symphony in William Schuman's "American Festival Overture," Mozart's Violin Concerto No. 2 (with Cho-Liang Lin), and Holst's "The Planets" (with the women of the Tanglewood Festival Chorus). . . . ¶ July 9 at 2:30: An all-Mozart program, with the Boston Symphony and the Tanglewood Festival Chorus; comprising the Kyrie (K. 341), "Ave Verum Corpus" (K. 618), D-Minor Piano Concerto (with Mitsuko Uchida), and Symphony No. 41. Seiji Ozawa and John Oliver share the podium. (Lenox, Mass. 1-413 637-1600.)

Glimmerglass Opera—July 8 at 8: "Don Giovanni." . . . ¶ July 9 at 2: "The Yeomen of the Guard." (Cooperstown, N.Y. 1-607 547-2255.)

Maverick Concerts—The Audubon String Quartet plays quartets by Dohnányi (his Second) and Peter Schickele (his First), as well as Franck's Piano Quintet (with Bernard Rose). (Woodstock, N.Y. 1-914 679-8217. July 9 at 3.)

Music Mountain—Music by Haydn, Ravel, and Shostakovich, with the St. Petersburg String Quartet and pianist Samuel Bartos. (Falls Village, Conn. For information about tickets, call 1-203 824-7126. July 9 at 3.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

American Giglio—Brooklyn's Feast of the Giglio stages a pageant in honor of the fifth-century saint Paulinus, the noble Bishop of Nola, Italy, who became a slave in the place of a widow's only son. When he returned from servitude to his see, Paulinus was greeted by cheering townspeople waving lilies (*gigli*). In the Brooklyn version, a four-ton, eighty-five-foot-tall shrine to the saint (with a twenty-piece band on its platform) moves for three hours through the streets of Williamsburg, borne aloft on the shoulders of a hundred and fifty men. The festival runs from July 5 to July 16 and features two such herculean adventures, on July 9 at 1 and July 15 at 2. (Our Lady of Mount Carmel, N. 8th and Havemeyer Sts. 1-718 384-0223.)

Swing Sets—The big ballet companies have gone off to their summer dance dates, but the pas de deux continues with **midsummer night swing** under the stars at Lincoln Center. Live music out on the Fountain Plaza begins at 8:15, on Wednesdays through Saturdays, through July 22. To brush up on your touch dancing, you can take lessons at 6:30, on Wednesdays through Fridays. July 5: The New York–Buenos Aires Connection (the house band for Irène Hultman's "Tango-Babe") sets the pace. . . . ¶ July 6: Savannah Sky pumps out the two-step music. . . . ¶ July 7: The Orquesta Broadway and Pete (El Conde) Rodriguez play salsa and charanga. . . . ¶ July 8: The Roy Gerson Orchestra headlines Swing Saturday.

Readings—July 6 at 7:30: Eduardo Galeano reads from "Walking Words," his collection of modern fables. (Endicott Booksellers, 450 Columbus Ave., at 81st St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ July 6 at 8:30: Authors Lucy Grealy ("Autobiography of a Face") and Anna Quindlen ("One True Thing") and monologuist Miss Coco Peru open the Central Park SummerStage spoken-word series. (Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ July 8 at 7:30: A reading of Robert Lowell's poetry. Those who call ahead may reserve the Lowell poem they would like to read. (Stowell & Sons, 33-18 Broadway, Astoria. To choose your poem, call 1-718 204-5775.)

Talks—July 6 at 7: Charlie Rose talks with Newt Gingrich. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100.) . . . ¶ July 7 at 6 and July 8 at 11 A.M.: Claire Picher, founder of the Theatre of the Oppressed laboratory, leads a two-day workshop of games, exercises, and scene work for activist actors. (Brecht Forum, 122 W. 27th St. For more information, call 242-4201.) . . . ¶ July 8 at noon and 2: Sigrid Goldiner talks about the Catalan cloister of Saint-Michel-de-Cuxa, the center of a remote twelfth-century monastery in the Pyrenees, now reconstructed in northernmost Manhattan. (The Cloisters, Fort Tryon Park. 650-2280. No charge beyond museum admission.)

Walks—July 9 at 1: Big Onion Walking Tours pays a visit to the former Little Ireland, the site of the original St. Patrick's Cathedral and the Five Points slum. For more information, call 439-1090.

TOM BLOOM

In the early 1900s, the world was at peace and democracy was ascendent. But a series of missteps led to devastating world wars and depression, culminating with the Cold War. The world in 1995 looks much the same as it did at the turn of the century. Will we get it right this time? Or are we destined to relive the mistakes of the past? Forbes Magazine examines America's pivotal role in shaping the course of this century and what it must do now to assure peace and freedom in the 21st century.

Watch "Happily Ever After? The 20th Century Struggles for Democracy." Saturday, July 8 at 8:00pm. On The Discovery Channel.

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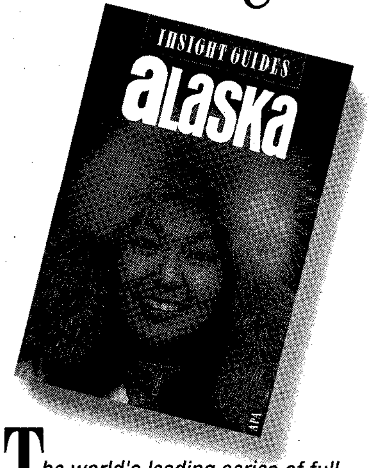

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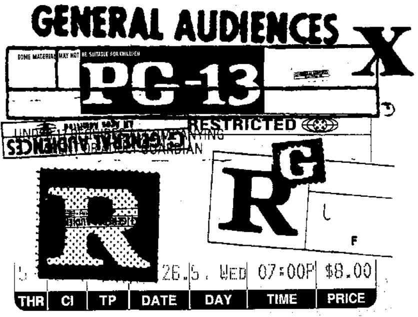

THE MOVIES

FILMS OPENING THIS WEEK

CARMEN MIRANDA: BANANAS IS MY BUSINESS—A documentary about the life of the Brazilian-born icon. Directed by Helena Solberg. In English and Portuguese. Opening July 5. (Film Forum.)

THE CRUDE OASIS—A low-budget début by writer-director Alex Graves, about a lonely housewife in Kansas (Jennifer Taylor) who pursues the local gas-station attendant (Aaron Shields), the subject of her nightmares. With Robert Peterson as her adulterous husband. Opening July 7. (Cinema II.)

FIRST KNIGHT—The latest version of the legend of Camelot stars Sean Connery as King Arthur, Richard Gere as Lancelot, and Julia Ormond as Guinevere. Directed by Jerry Zucker. Screenplay by William Nicholson. Opening July 7. (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, Beekman, Orpheum VII, Lincoln Square, and Criterion Center.)

SPECIES—Ben Kingsley, Michael Madsen, Alfred Molina, and Forest Whitaker star in a science-fiction thriller about what happens when scientists inject a human embryo with alien DNA. Also with Marg Helgenberger and Natasha Henstridge. Directed by Roger Donaldson. Written by Dennis Feldman. Opening July 7. (Village Theatre VII, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, and Astor Plaza.)

CURRENT FILMS

(The signed notes are by Bruce Diones, Sarah Kerr, Anthony Lane, and Terrence Rafferty. If a movie has been reviewed in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given. Theatre addresses and phone numbers are listed on page 20.)

APOLLO 13—Ron Howard's re-creation of the near-fatal 1970 lunar mission. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) (34th Street Showplace, First & 62nd Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Waverly, Chelsea Cinemas, Ziegfeld, and Regency.)

BANDIT QUEEN—The early years of Phoolan Devi (Seema Biswas), the Indian woman who with her gang massacred nearly thirty upper-caste men in 1978 and today is a political force in her nation. Directed by Shekhar Kapur. Written by Mala Sen, from Devi's prison diaries. In Hindi. (Village East Cinemas and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

BATMAN FOREVER—The latest picture dedicated to law and order in Gotham City. Directed by Joel Schumacher. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, Gemini, Orpheum VII, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, and Criterion Center.)

BRAVEHEART—Mel Gibson is the star, director, and co-producer of this hefty new epic, which lasts nearly three hours and covers more than thirty years of medieval Scottish history. He plays William Wallace, the hero with the thrash-metal hair who decides to make life hell for the Englishmen who are crawling all over his country. The political argument that ensues is pretty dull, but the battle scenes are the loudest and most convincing in years: Gibson has learned from Kurosawa in lending a clarifying thrust to what is, essentially, chaos. With Patrick McGoohan, Catherine McCormack, and Sophie Marceau.—A.L. (6/5/95) (Village Theatre VII, 34th St. East, New York Twin, East 85th Street, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and National Twin.)

THE BRIDGES OF MADISON COUNTY—You can't help wondering what a completely faithful adaptation of Robert James Waller's best-selling novel would have looked like: a sort of "Natural Born Lovers," presumably, full of swirling zoom shots and lunatic superimpositions. As it is, screenwriter Richard LaGravenese and director Clint Eastwood have turned out something sombre and restrained—almost, in fact, good (though it's too long). Eastwood also stars, as Kincaid, the strolling photographer who shows up at an Iowa farmhouse and falls for the lonely Francesca (Meryl Streep). The two leads' sly comic rhythm is miles removed from the book's flailing solemnity, though Eastwood has bravely given himself the few ridiculous lines that survived.—A.L. (6/19/95) (Village Theatre VII, Murray Hill Cinemas, Tower East, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

CASPER—The story involves a dead mother, a lonely child, a grieving father, hidden treasure, and a dead-are-watching-over-us finale that's almost unbearable. But the production is a wonder of creamy Gaudí-inspired sets and computer-generated marvels. Brad Silberling, the director, gets very convincing performances from Christina Ricci and Bill Pullman, and he allows Casper and his three unruly uncles, Fatso, Stretch, and Stinkie, to steal the film.—B.D. (First & 62nd Cinemas, Art Greenwich Twin, 23rd St. West Triplex, and Olympia.)

CONGO—The director, Frank Marshall, who has produced films for Steven Spielberg, gets his own Michael Crichton book to play with—and the results are disastrous. To be fair, "Congo" wasn't much of a book either—a talking gorilla, super satellites, diamond mines, killer apes, earthquakes—it was Jules Verne meets "Planet of the Apes." The film strands the actors in a sea of silly dialogue (although Tim Curry, cast as a Romanian philanthropist, seems to be having a little fun with the whole mess), and Marshall, who has directed some nifty films ("Arachnophobia," "Alive"), doesn't know where the comedy ends and the adventure begins. The film received some of the worst reviews of the summer, but audiences Congo-lined up anyway. It's a testament to Crichton's dubious popularity—the movie isn't funny or exciting.—B.D. (19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, Art Greenwich Twin, and 84th Street Sixplex. . . . ¶ Astor Plaza; through July 6.)

CRIMSON TIDE—A doomsday thriller that reunites the infamous "Top Gun" team: producers Don Simpson and Jerry Bruckheimer and director Tony Scott. It's a movie for people who really miss the Cold War. Russkies are on the rampage again, and the fate of the world hangs by its customary thread. Aboard the nuclear sub U.S.S. Alabama, the captain (Gene Hackman) and the executive officer (Denzel Washington) bicker and take turns relieving each other of command. The action is loud and flashy, but there isn't really much suspense. The movie operates in such well-charted waters that it feels less like a dangerous naval mission than like a luxury cruise: the accommodations are cozy and the activities carefully planned.—T.R. (5/15/95) (Village East Cinemas, Gotham Cinema, Orpheum VII, 23rd St. West Triplex, 84th Street Sixplex, and Embassy.)

CRUMB—Terry Zwigoff's brilliant, scary documentary about the underground-comics artist R. Crumb. While the film is reviewing Crumb's career, from its psychedelic-era heyday to the present, and following him as he goes about his everyday activities, it's also telling a harrowing story about his damaged family. The movie is often funny, but what makes it extraordinary is that it explores, without presuming to explain, the sources of a unique and savage comic sensibility. And it shows us that Crumb's gift—the detachment that allows him to create such hilariously contemptuous images of the world around him (and inside him)—is also a kind of curse, or, at least, a nasty habit.—T.R. (5/1/95) (Film Forum 3.)

Die Hard with a Vengeance—The third adventure with New York cop John McClane (Bruce Willis), the sweaty, blue-collar American counterpart of James Bond; once again, McClane gets his undershirt dirty foiling the schemes of a world-class megalomaniac (here, Jeremy Irons). John McTiernan—who directed the original "Die Hard" (1988) but sat out the first sequel—has returned, and his professionalism gives the series a lift. But if this picture is any indication, the ultimate fate of all action-movie series may be to become perfectly indistinguishable from one another. McTiernan supplies one climax after another, but when the whole intense, meaningless experience is over, you may have trouble putting a name or a face to the movie that just had its way with you. With Samuel L. Jackson.—T.R. (5/29/95) (Murray Hill Cinemas, Baronet, Coronet, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

The Glass Shield—The writer-director Charles Burnett ("Killer of Sheep," "To Sleep with Anger") uses the cop-thriller form to make a moving and emotionally acute drama of self-knowledge. The hero, J. J. Johnson (Michael Boatman), is an eager, idealistic young cop assigned to an L.A. County Sheriff's station; he's the first black man ever to serve there. J.J. is caught in a no man's land: members of his own community look at him as if he were a traitor, and the angry white men he works with consider him an outsider. The movie's early scenes are dominated by Boatman's brilliant performance as a man who, in the attempt to be all things to all people, becomes a mystery to himself. Later, as J.J. begins to uncover evidence of corruption, the film's scope widens, but the director's lucid style never falters. In Burnett's hands, this story (which was inspired by the real-life experiences of a black deputy) dramatizes a simple and profoundly political idea: you can't know yourself until you know what you're a part of. In its quiet way, this is the most subversive American movie in years.—T.R. (6/12/95) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, Manhattan Twin, and Embassy.)

The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love—Two high school seniors, Randy (Laurel Hollomon), a tomboy outcast, and Evie (Nicole Parker), a popular girl who has yet to come out, fall in love. The leads are charming, in a modest, indie-movie sort of way. But except for some farce at the end, as family and various oddball acquaintances—a microcosm of a world that needs to be sensitized—wait for Randy and Evie to come out of a motel room and admit that they're a couple, this is your basic puppy-love story rewritten for girls: admirably unsensational, earnest, and engaging, in the tradition of an after-school special. Written and directed by Maria Maggenti.—S.K. (Angelika Film Center and Carnegie Hall Cinemas.)

Judge Dredd—Sylvester Stallone is a twenty-second-century policeman in Danny Cannon's film version of the British comic strip. (Village Theatre VII, Sutton, 86th Street East Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, and Embassy 1.)

A Little Princess—Alfonso Cuarón's film, based on a novel by Frances Hodgson Burnett, is one of the rare children's movies that don't merely pay lip service to the imagination but actually use it. The script presents the battle of youthful fancy against adult "realism" as a kind of epic struggle; the antagonists are Sara Crewe (Liesel Matthews), a bright, happy, exuberantly creative girl, and Miss Minchin (Eleanor Bron), a boarding-school headmistress who is a ruthless downsizer of her pupils' imaginations. The message, spoken by Sara, is "*All* girls are little princesses," and, although that may sound a bit sticky, this funny, lively, stirring movie makes us believe it.—T.R. (5/29/95) (Manhattan Twin.)

Mighty Morphin Power Rangers: The Movie—The team of six teen-agers turned superheroes has vaulted from television to the big screen, with the cast intact. Directed by Bryan Spicer. (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, Murray Hill Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, and National Twin.)

Party Girl—As Mary, a trendy downtown New Yorker forced by circumstances to work as a library clerk, Parker Posey is on her way to creating a new female comic persona: wiry, hyperactive, tough, and insensitive, but somehow sympathetic. The hilarious script, co-written by first-time director Daisy von Scherler Mayer and Harry Birckmayer, is about growing up. With Omar Townsend as the Lebanese falafel vender Mary has a crush on, and the director's mother, Sasha von Scherler, as her disapproving godmother.—S.K. (Angelika Film Center and 84th Street Sixplex.)

Pocahontas—Disney's animated take on the Algonquin princess and Captain John Smith, with voices by Irene Bedard, Judy Kuhn, Mel Gibson, Russell Means, and Linda Hunt. (Village East Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Murray Hill Cinemas, Cinema I, 86th Street East Twin, Guild, Lincoln Square, and Olympia.)

The Postman—A drama about a fisherman's son (the late Massimo Troisi) who delivers mail to Pablo Neruda (Philippe Noiret) on a southern Italian island, where the Chilean poet lived in exile during the early nineteen-fifties. Directed by Michael Radford. In Italian. (Angelika Film Center, Cinema II, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Sister My Sister—Nancy Meckler's film was inspired by the 1933 incidents in a French country household—whose mistress (Julie Walters) tyrannized her two servants (Joely Richardson and Jodhi May)—that also provided the basis for Jean Genet's play "The Maids." Written by Wendy Kesselman. (Cinema Village.)

Smoke—Five years ago, the director Wayne Wang asked the novelist Paul Auster to work up one of his stories as a screenplay. The result—a highly cerebral intertwining of the lives of white and black characters in Brooklyn in 1990, centering on a cigar-store owner (Harvey Keitel) and a lonely writer (William Hurt)—is obviously a labor of love. But Wang's sentimentality and Auster's self-consciousness don't go together: the direction is literal, and the lines sound like short-story dialogue read aloud. Only Forest Whitaker, playing a guilty father, comes off well. A gorgeous sequence that runs behind the final credits—with no dialogue, just a song by Tom Waits—suggests what the film *might* have been. With Harold Perrineau, Jr., Stockard Channing, and Ashley Judd.—S.K. (Angelika Film Center, 68th St. Playhouse, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Wigstock: The Movie—The "Lady" Bunny has been organizing New York's drag festival for a decade now, and what began as a small wigs-and-heels gathering in Tompkins Square Park has grown into a major get-your-hot-dogs-here event. Barry Shils's record of the 1993-94 celebrations captures some of its style and playfulness—Joey Arias singing a Billie Holiday tune, Jackie Beat outfitted as the heir to Divine's designs, Lypsinka strutting across the stage like an escapee from a fifties Amana Radar Range demonstration. What's onscreen, though, could pretty much have been captured on anyone's camcorder, and the editing and directorial cues seem to have been taken from public-access television. The performers have character; the movie doesn't.—B.D. (Angelika Film Center.)

Wild Reeds—In 1962, near the end of the Algerian war, a French-Algerian teen-ager (Frédéric Gorny) arrives at a boys' boarding school in the south of France, where he takes up with two students (Gaël Morel and Stéphane Rideau) and the daughter of their teacher (Elodie Bouchez). Directed by André Téchiné. In French. (Quad Cinema.)

JW STEWART

Ernie Hudson, Amy, Laura Linney, and Dylan Walsh in "Congo."

ALSO PLAYING

BURNT BY THE SUN (reviewed in our issue of 5/8/95): Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **CIRCLE OF FRIENDS:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **DEVI:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **DOLORES CLAIBORNE** (4/3/95): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **DON JUAN DE MARCO** (4/10/95): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE ENGLISHMAN WHO WENT UP A HILL BUT CAME DOWN A MOUNTAIN** (5/15/95): Village East Cinemas and Cinema 3. . . . **EXOTICA:** Village East Cinemas. . . . **FORGET PARIS**

(5/22/95): Beekman, Orpheum VII, 23rd St. West Triplex, 62nd & Broadway, and Criterion Center. . . . **FRIDAY:** Criterion Center. . . . **HEAVEN'S A DRAG:** Quad Cinema. . . . **LITTLE ODESSA:** Eastside Playhouse and Quad Cinema. . . . **LOSING ISAIAH:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **LOVE AND HUMAN REMAINS:** Quad Cinema and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **THE MADNESS OF KING GEORGE** (1/16/95): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **MURIEL'S WEDDING:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE MYSTERY OF RAMPO:** Village East Cinemas. . . . **THE PEREZ FAMILY:** Plaza. . . . **PULP FICTION** (10/10/94): Movieland 8th Street Triplex. . . . **ROB ROY** (4/17/95): 59th Street East Cinema. . . . **SAFE:** Angelika Film Center. . . . **TALES FROM THE HOOD:** Criterion Center. . . . **TWO DAUGHTERS:** Angelika 57. . . . **WHILE YOU WERE SLEEPING** (5/22/95): Cinema 3rd Avenue, Olympia, and Embassy. . . . **WINGS OF COURAGE** (4/24/95): Lincoln Square.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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EAST SIDE

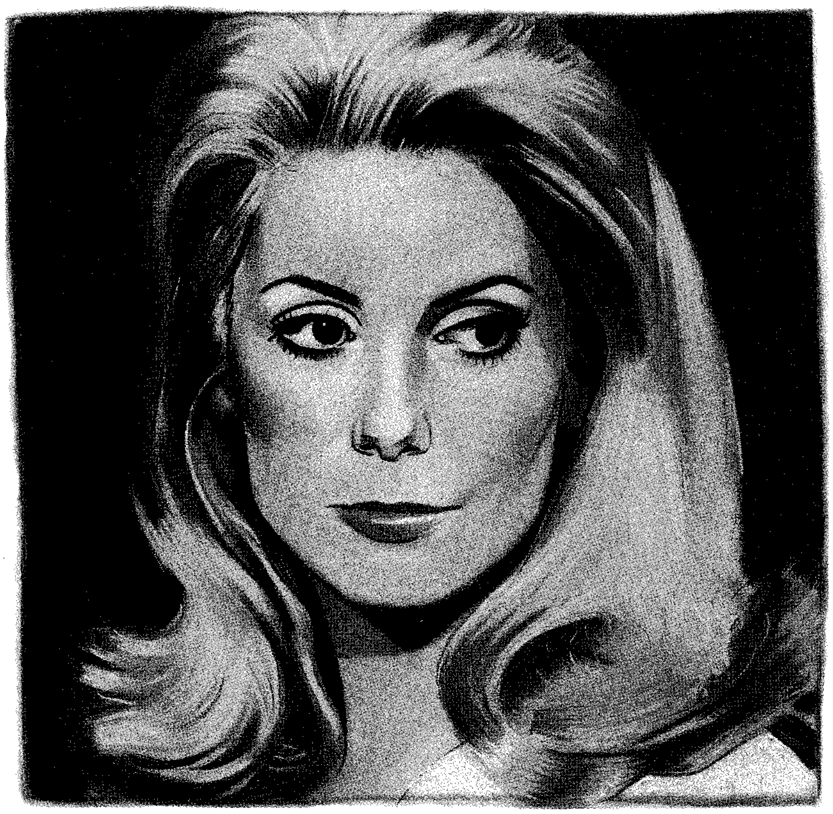
ANGELIKA FILM CENTER, 18 W. Houston St. (995-2000).
LITTLE THEATRE, Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171).
MOVIELAND 8TH STREET TRIPLEX, 36 E. 8th (477-6600).
VILLAGE THEATRE VII, 3rd Ave. at 11th (982-0400).
CINEMA VILLAGE, 22 E. 12th (924-3363).
VILLAGE EAST CINEMAS, 2nd Ave. at 12th (529-6799).
19TH STREET EAST 6, B'way at 19th (260-8000).
MURRAY HILL CINEMAS, 160 E. 34th (689-6548).
34TH STREET SHOWPLACE, 238 E. 34th (532-5544).
34TH ST. EAST, 241 E. 34th (683-0255).
EASTSIDE PLAYHOUSE, 3rd Ave. at 55th (755-3020).
SUTTON 1 AND 2, 3rd Ave. at 57th (759-1411).
GOTHAM CINEMA, 3rd Ave. at 58th (759-2262).
PLAZA, 42 E. 58th (355-3320).
MANHATTAN TWIN, 3rd Ave. at 59th (935-6420).
59TH STREET EAST CINEMA, 239 E. 59th (759-4630).
BARONET AND CORONET, 3rd Ave. at 59th (355-1663).
CINEMA I, CINEMA II, AND CINEMA 3RD AVENUE, 3rd Ave. at 60th (753-6022).
FIRST & 62ND CINEMAS, 400 E. 62nd (513-5408).
GEMINI 1 AND 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th (832-1670).
BEEKMAN, 2nd Ave. at 66th (737-2622).
NEW YORK TWIN, 2nd Ave. at 67th (744-7339).
68TH ST. PLAYHOUSE, 3rd Ave. at 68th (734-0302).
TOWER EAST, 3rd Ave. at 71st (879-1313).
EAST 85TH STREET, 1st Ave. at 85th (249-5100).
PARK & 86TH STREET CINEMAS, 125 E. 86th (534-1880).
ORPHEUM VII, 3rd Ave. at 86th (876-2400).
86TH STREET EAST TWIN, 3rd Ave. at 86th (249-1144).

WEST SIDE

FILM FORUM, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110).
WAVERLY 1 AND 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd (929-8037).
ART GREENWICH TWIN, Greenwich Ave. at 12th (929-3350).
QUAD CINEMA, 34 W. 13th (255-8800).
CHELSEA CINEMAS, 260 W. 23rd (513-5402).
23RD ST. WEST TRIPLEX, 333 W. 23rd (989-0060).
GUILD, 33 W. 50th (757-2406).
WORLDWIDE CINEMAS, 50th St., between 8th and 9th Aves. (504-0960).
ZIEGFELD, 141 W. 54th (765-7600).
CARNEGIE HALL CINEMAS, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th (265-2520).
ANGELIKA 57, 225 W. 57th (586-1900).
PARIS, 4 W. 58th (980-5656).
CINEMA 3, 2 W. 59th (752-5959).
62ND & BROADWAY, 62 W. 62nd (265-7466).
LINCOLN PLAZA CINEMAS, B'way at 63rd (757-2280).
REGENCY, B'way at 67th (724-3700).
LINCOLN SQUARE, B'way at 68th (336-5000).
84TH STREET SIXPLEX, B'way at 84th (877-3600).
METRO CINEMA 1 AND 2, B'way at 99th (222-1200).
OLYMPIA I AND II, B'way at 107th (865-8128).

TIMES SQUARE AREA

CRITERION CENTER, B'way at 44th (354-0900).
EMBASSY 1, B'way at 46th (302-0494).
EMBASSY 2, 3, AND 4, 7th Ave. at 47th (730-7262).
ASTOR PLAZA, 44th St. at B'way (869-8340).
NATIONAL TWIN, B'way at 44th (869-0950).



At the Paris, Catherine Deneuve in "Belle de Jour."

JULIAN ALLEN

REVIVALS

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael, Terrence Rafferty, and Michael Sragow. Theatre addresses and phone numbers appear with the listings following these notes.)

BELLE DE JOUR (1967)—Luis Buñuel was in his late sixties when he made this icy, bracingly unwholesome film about the secret life of an elegant Parisian bourgeoise. Séverine (Catherine Deneuve), who is frigid with her handsome and considerate husband (Jean Sorel), spends her afternoons as a prostitute in a discreet, upscale brothel, where her cool passivity makes her a big draw: she's a screen onto which men can project their erotic fantasies. And since Séverine's fantasies—lovingly dramatized by Buñuel—tend to involve her own subjugation, she gets something out of these strange encounters, too. The movie, adapted by Buñuel and Jean-Claude Carrière from a popular novel by Joseph Kessel, is a pristine example of the great filmmaker's serenely outrageous late style. In this picture, desire has a de-luxe blandness that's both mysterious and deeply, unnervingly funny. Also with Michel Piccoli, Geneviève Page, and Pierre Clementi. Cinematography by Sacha Vierny. Deneuve's clothes are by Yves Saint Laurent. In French.—T.R. (Paris.)

BLESSED EVENT (1932)—Probably nobody in Hollywood history was better at the art of timing and placing a wisecrack than Lee Tracy. (He used his hands as much as his voice.) In this newspaper comedy-satire based on the rise of the fast-talking gossip columnist Walter Winchell, Tracy shows his peerless style—he can get a sob in his voice for the benefit of his radio listeners while grinning at his intimates. The columnist has a pet peeve—a bright-eyed young crooner with an idiotic smile, played by Dick Powell. It's quick and breezy and very likable. Directed by Roy Del Ruth, from a play by Manuel Seff and Forrest Wilson, adapted by Howard Green.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; July 8.)

THE FRONT PAGE (1931)—A gleeful rejiggering of the crack Ben Hecht–Charles MacArthur newspaper comedy. Ruthless editor Walter Burns (Adolphe Menjou) manipulates ace reporter Hildy Johnson (Pat O'Brien) into postponing marriage and covering an execution; ink-stained clowns spew purple jokes and argot. The director, Lewis Milestone ("All Quiet on the Western Front"), always worked best in the trenches—the movie's press room has all the testosterone of a gym or a barracks. He employs showy tricks without mucking things up: at one point, the newsmen's faces roll into frame like the fruits on a one-armed bandit. Charles Lederer supplied "additional dialogue" for Bartlett Cormack's adaptation.—M.S. (Museum of Modern Art; July 8 and 11.)

JOURNEY INTO FEAR (1943)—This labyrinthine spy story about smuggling munitions out of Turkey is loaded down with terror hocus-pocus and high-toned conversations. It's a halfhearted—almost fey—film, with a lot of dark atmosphere and unusual camera angles that don't amount to much; the pacing is uncertain, and the suspense doesn't build. Orson Welles, who appears as the Turkish police chief Colonel Haki, is credited, along with Joseph Cotten, for the rather eccentric adaptation of the Eric Ambler novel. Welles also supervised the making of this Mercury Production, though it was at least partly directed by Norman Foster. The cast includes Cotten, Dolores Del Rio, Everett Sloane, and Agnes Moorehead.—P.K. (American Museum of the Moving Image; July 9.)

THE LITTLE PRINCESS (1939)—This first talking-movie version of Frances Hodgson Burnett's classic children's book pivots on the showmanship of Shirley Temple, who plays Sara Crewe, the rich girl reduced to drudgery in a London boarding school. The movie retains characters like the villainous headmistress Miss Minchin (Mary Nash) and the lovable scullery maid Becky (Sybil Jason) but otherwise degenerates into a homefront saga of the Boer War, complete with Sara singing and dancing for the wounded. She's *too* princessy—she even wins the blessings of Queen Victoria. All in all, it's Union Jack-waving pap. Temple's hoofing partner is Arthur Treacher, in the new role of Miss Minchin's brother; Richard Greene and Anita Louise contribute tepid romance. Walter Lang directed; Ethel

Hill and Walter Ferris wrote the script.—M.S. (Walter Reade Theatre; July 8-9.)

Le Million (1931)—René Clair at his exquisite best; no one else has ever been able to make a comedy move with such delicate, dreamlike inevitability. René Lefèvre plays the poor young painter who has a winning lottery ticket—only he hasn't quite got it; it was in the pocket of a coat that got sold to a secondhand shop. The entire film, which Clair adapted from a stage musical, is the hero's chase after the ticket, with his creditors, his girl (Annabella), his friends, and the police chasing after him. This movie is lyrical, choreographic, giddy—it's the best French musical of its period. The cinematography is by Georges Périnal; the art direction is by Lazare Meerson. In French.—P.K. (Walter Reade Theatre; July 9.)

Roxie Hart (1942)—Roxie (Ginger Rogers) is the 1926 sensation of Chicago—a flapper on trial for her life who has the time of her life while on trial. She is coached and defended by Adolphe Menjou in sequences that may be the funniest courtroom buffoonery ever filmed. The scriptwriter, Nunnally Johnson, provides a loving, satiric look at the speakeasies, floozies, and tabloids, with a glance at the forsaken rural boredom. William Wellman directed, in a fast, broad, spirited style (though the end is the kind of studio-factory finish that no director can do anything with). The cast is first-rate: Iris Adrian is Two-Gun Gertie; the reporters and photographers include Lynne Overman, Phil Silvers, George Montgomery, William Frawley, and Spring Byington as a sob sister. Sara Allgood is the prison matron, Nigel Bruce is a theatrical agent, and George Chandler is Roxie's husband. Even Jeff Corey turns up in a bit. Adapted from the Maurine Watkins play "Chicago."—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; July 6 and 9.)

Super Fly (1972)—Gaudy black-exploitation film with explicit racism and some that's implicit (the hero deals in cocaine, which is supposed to be O.K., since most of the users are white). Partly slick, partly amateurish. With Ron O'Neal and Carl Lee; directed by Gordon Parks, Jr.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; through July 9.)

Three Comrades (1938)—Scott Fitzgerald worked on many films, but this is one of the rare ones that actually retain his spirit. ("Winter Carnival" is another.) Bits of the dialogue are elegantly romantic, and the atmosphere has his distinctive chivalrous quality. Margaret Sullavan, slender and special, and with her ravishing huskiness, is an ideal Fitzgerald heroine—a perfect Daisy—and she brings her elusive, gallant sexiness to this First World War romance, taken from a Remarque novel. It's conventional and heavy and false in the M-G-M manner, but with this delicate Fitzgerald feeling rising out of it at times. The movie is still awful; it has a particularly offensive tear-jerking score by Franz Waxman. The script is credited to Fitzgerald and Edward A. Paramore. Directed by Frank Borzage.—P.K. (Walter Reade Theatre; July 6.)

LATE RUNS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

Film Forum 2, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)—Through July 9: "Super Fly" (†). . . . ¶ July 10-11: "The Klansman" (1974, Terence Young and Sam Fuller), with Lee Marvin, Richard Burton, Lola Falana, and Linda Evans; and "The Thing with Two Heads" (1972, Lee Frost), with Ray Milland and Rosie Grier.

Little Theatre, Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171)—The Public's annual Italian summer festival, running through July 13, includes silent films, films from the thirties, and more recent films whose action takes place between 1900 and 1939.

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A series of films made from Broadway plays. July 6 at 2:30: "The Happy Time" (1952, Richard Fleischer). . . . ¶ July 6 at 6: "Stage Door" (1937, Gregory La Cava). . . . ¶ July 6 at 8 and July 9 at 1: "Roxie Hart" (†). . . . ¶ July 7 at 2:30: "I Remember Mama" (1948, George Stevens). . . . ¶ July 7 at 6 and July 10 at 1: "Lady Windermere's Fan" (1925, Ernst Lubitsch; silent). . . . ¶ July 7 at 8 and July 11 at 3: "Christopher Bean" (1933, Sam Wood). . . . ¶ July 8 at 1: "Blessed Event" (†). . . . ¶ July 8 at 3: "Five Star Final" (1931, Mervyn LeRoy). . . . ¶ July 8 at 5 and July 11 at 6: "The Front Page" (†). . . . ¶ July 9 at 3: "His Girl Friday" (1940, Howard Hawks). . . . ¶ July 9 at 5: "My Sister Eileen" (1942, Alexander Hall). . . . ¶ July 10 at 3: "Dodsworth" (1936, William Wyler). . . . ¶ July 10 at 6: "The Women" (1939, George Cukor). . . . ¶ July 11 at 1: "The Strawberry Blonde" (1941, Raoul Walsh).

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level (875-5600)—French comedies, from the silent era to the present. July 5 at 2 and 6:15 and July 6 at 4 and 9: "Les Tontons Flingueurs" (1963, Georges Lautner). . . . July 5 at 4:15 and 8:30 and July 6 at 2: "La Chèvre" (1981, Francis Véber). . . . July 7 at 2, 6, and 10:10 and July 8 at 4 and 8: "La Nuit Fantastique" (1942, Marcel L'Herbier). . . . July 7 at 3:45 and 7:50 and July 8 at 5:45 and 9:45: "Carnival in Flanders" (1935, Jacques Feyder). . . . July 9 at 4 and 8: "Zero for Conduct" (1933, Jean Vigo) and "L'Affaire Est dans le Sac" (1932, Pierre Prévert). . . . July 9 at 6:15 and 10:15: "Le Million" (†). . . . July 10 at 2, 6, and 9:30 and July 11 at 3:45: "Heaven Sent" (1963, Jean-Pierre Mocky). . . . July 10 at 3:45 and 7:45 and July 11 at 2: "Boudu Saved from Drowning" (1931, Jean Renoir). . . . ¶ July 6 at 6:15: "Three Comrades" (†). . . . ¶ Weekend showings for children. July 8-9 at 2: "The Little Princess" (†).

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (1-718 784-0077)—Films and television work by Orson Welles. July 8 at 3: "Citizen Kane" (1941). . . . July 8 at 5:30: "It's All True: Based on an Unfinished Film by Orson Welles" (1993). . . . July 9 at 2: "The Magnificent Ambersons" (1942). . . . July 9 at 4: "The Colgate Palmolive Theater: The Fountain of Youth" (1958). . . . July 9 at 5: "Journey into Fear" (†).

A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St. (989-4850)—A Saturday- and Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On July 8 at 7, the feature will be "Entre Nous" (1983, Diane Kurys; in French), with Isabelle Huppert and Miou-Miou; on July 9 at 7, "Pillow Talk" (1959, Michael Gordon), with Doris Day, Rock Hudson, and Tony Randall.

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—July 11 at 12:30, 3:15, 6, and 8:45: "Tous les Matins du Monde" (1992, Alain Corneau; in French), with Jean-Pierre Marielle, Gérard Depardieu, Anne Brochet, and Guillaume Depardieu.

Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (570-3949)—July 7-8 at 7: "A Place in the Sun" (1951, George Stevens), with Montgomery Clift, Elizabeth Taylor, and Shelley Winters.

Bryant Park, Sixth Ave. at 42nd St.—Mondays, starting at dusk: free drive-in-style moviegoing, beginning with Looney Tunes and coming attractions. The feature on July 10 will be "Laura" (1944, Otto Preminger), with Gene Tierney, Clifton Webb, and Dana Andrews. (Rain date is the following night.)

Whitney Museum, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—July 5 at 1:30 and July 6 at 6:15: "The Naked City" (1948, Jules Dassin), with Barry Fitzgerald. . . . ¶ July 5 at 4 and July 6 at 2:30: "Masculine Feminine" (1965, Jean-Luc Godard; in French), with Jean-Pierre Léaud and Chantal Goya. . . . ¶ July 7-9 at 12:30: "Rear Window" (1954, Alfred Hitchcock), with James Stewart, Grace Kelly, and Wendell Corey. . . . ¶ July 7-9 at 3:30: "Blow-Up" (1966, Michelangelo Antonioni), with Vanessa Redgrave and David Hemmings.

Museum of Television and Radio, 25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—Television shows by the team of William Hanna and Joseph Barbera. Through July 9: "The Flintstones."

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CULTURAL ATTRACTIONS

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St., NYC. A major survey of the work of German artist Georg Baselitz continues through September 17th. While Baselitz is known for his achievements as a painter, sculptor, printmaker, and draftsman, this current exhibition highlights his most renowned paintings and features a select group of his most critical works in sculpture. Spanning 3 decades of the artist's career, this large-scale exhibition, SPONSORED BY HUGO BOSS, includes approximately 100 paintings and a number of major sculptures, filling the museum's entire Frank Lloyd Wright-designed rotunda and 2 of the Tower Galleries. Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 A.M. to 6 P.M. Fridays and Saturdays, 10 A.M. to 8 P.M. For more information about this exhibit call **1-212-423-3500.**

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THE
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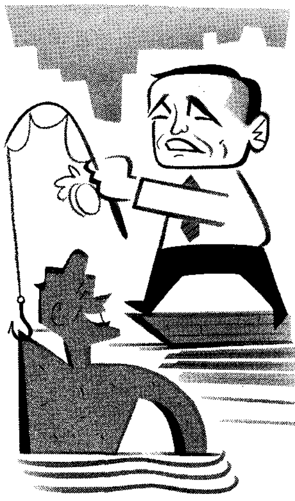
THE TALK OF THE TOWN

THE JOB THAT NOBODY WANTS

New York City's last four schools chancellors have, in reverse order, quit, been sent packing by a vote of the Board of Education, filled in as a temp, and died after little more than a year in office. The most recent one, Ramon C. Cortines, cheerily penned "No regrets!" at the bottom of his resignation letter, in the manner of a man going to the gallows for an act of principle. Cortines finally gave way before a torrent of abuse from Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, who not long ago referred to him as playing a "little victim." Perhaps the stoic Cortines has no regrets about taking the job. But you have to wonder if the near certainty of ending up as a burnt offering won't scare off candidates this time around.

The search process got under way last week. "It'll have to be dragooning," jokes Waldemar Rojas, speaking from San Francisco, where he serves as superintendent of schools (Cortines's former job). Rojas was one of the challengers whom Cortines beat out, and his name has frequently been mentioned in the early speculation. "They should not look for my application this go-around," says Rojas, who spent twenty-four years in the New York schools. "Last time, they were looking at potential financial difficulty. This time, they're in the midst of drastic difficulty without consensus or a willingness to develop consensus. You've got two masters"—the Mayor and the Board of Education—"and it's a question of which master hates you, or both."

The Board of Education will, of course, find eager candidates, and may even locate someone acceptable to the Mayor. But people who know the city well tend to view the chancellorship as a ticket to oblivion. Peter Goldmark, the president of the Rockefeller Foundation and a former budget director for Governor Hugh Carey, says that he's talked to a number of qualified figures whose attitude toward the job is "There's a big sign someone has put up by this swimming hole saying, 'Watch Out for Crocodiles.' " Goldmark adds that he's definitely not interested himself: "I've got a good job, and I've got real, full, strong support from my board. The chancellorship is a tough job under the best of circumstances; if the political powers don't have their act together, it's virtually impossible."



Maybe the city needs the sort of unsinkable character who scoffs at the idea of the impossible. Might the ebullient Vartan Gregorian, who revitalized the New York Public Library and charmed the city of immigrants with his Armenianized English, make himself available? "On two occasions, there was an overture made," says Gregorian, speaking from Brown University, which he now serves as president. "My wife said, 'You're going to die one day—why don't you die for a million children?' I said, 'Yes, why not, provided, first, that New York's public-school system announces Chapter 11 and revamps the whole thing. Board of Education should disappear or be replaced with five university presidents. They would be accountable for the quality of the product they would be getting.' " Gregorian says that he has "toyed with" the idea. So does that mean he's willing to throw his hat in the ring? Apparently not. "The news of my martyrdom complex has been slightly exaggerated," he concludes puckishly.

In any case, it may be that neither Goldmark nor Gregorian—nor, for that matter, Rojas—would satisfy the Mayor's standards. Giuliani has suggested that the board hire not an educator but "someone who has run a large corporation, been able to turn it around, has had to withstand the pressure of people disagreeing." Bill Funk, a partner in the executive-search firm of Korn/Ferry International, says that he has discussed just this question with many of his C.E.O. clients. He suggests that New Yorkers not hold their breath. While Funk concedes that there "might be a masochistic C.E.O. out there," he points out that the kind of executive New York would need would almost certainly require more money, and more freedom of action, than the city can provide. "It's a very daunting situation," he says.

Perhaps the schools need a retired executive—a very tough, very rich one. The toughest ex-C.E.O. in New York is probably Martin S. Davis, the former head of Paramount, who in 1989 came within an ace of buying Time Inc. Davis, reached at his Manhattan office, sounds skeptical. "To be tough," he says in his famously crisp style, "you've got to be decisive; to be decisive, you've got to know who your constituency is. You can be the toughest person in the world, but if you don't have the backing you're going to fail." Davis says that he is speaking gen-

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ROBERT RISKO

erally, not necessarily with respect to New York City. He also notes that he is currently quite busy. The chancellorship, he says, "has zero interest for me, period."

OF FRIENDS AND FRIENDSHIPS

For more than three decades now, Cynthia O'Neal, the president and co-founder of Friends In Deed, which was one of four AIDS-related charities to benefit from a giant auction last week at Sotheby's, has maintained a singularly discreet profile. Discreet, that is, in comparison with some of her friends, who together form a circle that has saturated the city's creative life for so long that one of its members, Stephen Sondheim, has been known to call it the Blob. The Blob's luminaries—Leonard Bernstein, Phyllis and Adolph Green, Betty Comden, Mike Nichols—may have brought the group fame, and Mrs. Leonard Bernstein (Felicia) may have been its heart, but O'Neal has long given this mandarinate its style.

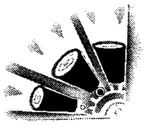
At Sotheby's, the Blob was ably represented: O'Neal sat center-aisle in the main auction room, with Comden and Michael Mindlin, the group's memory bank, in front of her. The three kept up a commentary on the well-groomed crowd and the well-choreographed flow of art work. It was all quite subdued, except for the moment when Diana (Dede) Brooks, Sotheby's president and C.E.O., announced that it would be the role of Robert Woolley, the head of the house's decorative-arts division and the evening's honoree, to sit in a thronelike armchair next to the auctioneer and "*kibitz*."

"Are we on the East Side tonight?" O'Neal asked.

O'Neal comes naturally by her humor. She was born in 1934, into a high-spirited California household; in 1956, in the midst of a harried career as an actress and model, she met the actor Patrick O'Neal while they were both appearing in a television show on NBC. They were married seven months later. In the early sixties, Patrick and his brother, Michael, noticed a dearth of restaurants around the then emerging Lincoln Center, and decided to open the Ginger Man, which they named after the play, by J. P. Donleavy, that Patrick was starring in. The restaurant got four stars when it opened, in June of 1964, and quickly became a preferred Blob hangout. Though the guys ran the place, Cynthia attended to its literary-Irish-bar look and set its famously convivial tone. "You didn't want to be anyplace else," she says now of what was at the time a one-room establishment with a tiny kitchen. "Chagall was there for lunch, because he was doing the murals across the street. And all the artists started coming right away. It was very inside."

By the seventies, the O'Neals had moved on to more spiritual pursuits, principally those led by the sixties-associated guru Ram Dass. They sometimes took friends along, but the Blob, defined by its *echt* New York ethos (knowing, ironic, overanalyzed), didn't wholeheartedly embrace these pursuits. And although by the eighties Cynthia had begun selling her own designs in a SoHo store, her interest in appearances, which had never been aggressive, was al-

LEAVING THE ROLE



Every night for the last eight months, as the overture to "Sunset Boulevard" began, I was in my dressing room making the final preparations for my entrance as Norma Desmond. In a ritual not unlike surgeons preparing for a challenging operation, my dresser and I worked in silence.

> "I guess it was five A.M.
> A homicide had been reported."

We could hear the opening lines coming over the tinny intercom. I'd be handed the black silk pajamas, and while the back was being fastened I put on the jewelled pendant and the sparkling diamond bracelets and rings. The black-and-gold caftan was held open like the wings of a huge, exotic bat, as I folded myself into it. Finally, I set the turban on my head, buffed my red fingernails, took a drink of water, and checked my makeup for the last time. Over my shoulder I could see reflected in the mirror a portrait of my maternal grandmother, a lady whose physicality and spirit greatly informed the character who now stared back at me from the mirror. By this point, we could hear that Joe Gillis was now at Paramount, soon to be chased down Sunset Boulevard, his fate sealed. We made our way to the stage and climbed the high tower from which I would step onto the magnificent mansion that hung suspended, like a hovering spaceship, in the darkness above the stage.

An actor's life is defined by a series of entrances and exits, some more auspicious than others. On July 2nd, I will make my last entrance as Norma Desmond. I will leave the role, and someone else will step into it, bringing her own sensibility and history. The same thing has happened to me before, only in reverse. At the beginning of my career, my life was irrevocably changed by another entrance and exit.

In 1974, I found myself hired by the New Phoenix Repertory Theatre for a season on Broadway. I was to have tiny roles in all the company's three productions and understudy the female leads. It was during the run of the first play, Congreve's "Love for Love," that I learned my first and what I consider the greatest life lesson. The leading lady whom I was understudying was the beautiful and accomplished English actress Mary Ure. In her younger days, she had been the toast of London, appearing in many groundbreaking plays. She had, in fact, been married to John Osborne, the original Angry Young Man. After a decade of near obscurity, she was hoping to make a comeback.

Her beauty, though still great, was no longer spontaneous and artless. Offstage, one could see that she was under a great deal of strain. Some people were saying that she couldn't do it. So for her the stakes were very high.

We were out of town in Philadelphia, and she was in trouble. Onstage, there were occasional glimpses of her old magic, but she was having difficulty remembering her lines and having upsetting confrontations with our director, Hal Prince. We came to New York and started our Broadway previews, and matters got worse. I, of course, so hungry and ambitious, had observed her every rehearsal and had diligently learned all the lines. I was miserable and cried a lot out of sheer frustration. All I wanted was the chance to go on—to prove myself. Wasn't it obvious that she couldn't do it? What were they waiting for?

It all came to a head during our last Saturday matinée before opening. I entered the Helen Hayes Theatre—since demolished, and deeply mourned—and was startled to be met by Mr. Prince. He steered me out onto the darkened stage and said, "During this matinée performance, I'm deciding whether to let Mary go. So after the final curtain stay in your dressing room. If you hear that you're wanted in the costume department, that means that my decision is made and you will go on tonight. Can you do it?" I had had no understudy rehearsals and had never even walked through the show. But I took a deep breath and said "Yes."

At the final curtain, I ran up the five floors to my rather drab and dingy dressing room and waited. After what seemed like hours, I heard the intercom click, and someone said, "Glenn Close, you are wanted down in costumes."

Down I went. They put me in her costume, suffused with her distinctive, evocative perfume. They put her wig, still damp from her performance, on my head, and I was taken up to her dressing room—the star dressing room, on stage level. On the empty walls were the hooks from which she had just taken down all the pictures of her children. I was overwhelmed by the sudden realization that my chance of a lifetime was her terrible tragedy. An uncanny calm came over me. The cast was called back early from dinner. We had an hour to walk through the show.

Half an hour before curtain, in the strange, haunted dressing room, I tried to prepare myself. People kept running in and out. Last-minute flowers from the cast, the producers, and Hal. Heads popping in with "Break a leg!" and "Knock 'em dead!"

A few minutes before curtain, a note was brought to me. I opened it and read, "Dear Glenn, It is a tradition in the English theatre for one leading lady to welcome the next leading lady into her dressing room. I learned this when I was very young and making my début at the Haymarket. I was surprised to find a letter for me from Dame Peggy Ashcroft, who had just closed after a long run. I salute you and welcome you. Be brave and strong. Mary Ure."

Life went on. I did the show and was adequate. I had a lot to learn, but I did learn with every performance, graciously supported by my fellow-actors. When the run was over, I was sent back up to my garret of a dressing room and resumed my life as an understudy.

The following spring, Mary Ure died. At the time, I thought that hers had been a curious choice of words: "Be brave and strong." How could that apply to me, so full of hope and possibility? Now, twenty-one years later, I think I understand. On July 2nd, I will welcome Betty Buckley into Dressing Room No. 1. I will leave a note on the table. I will make my exit. —GLENN CLOSE

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ready waning. "I remember very clearly watching someone walk out of the boutique, about 1987, and thinking, I don't give a damn how people dress themselves," she says.

In 1988, at a New Age-type workshop, O'Neal met Archie Harrison, a young AIDS patient. She spent a lot of time with him and his lover in the following year, until Harrison died. During that time, she began to realize what she wanted to do. Others could focus on activism or on medical treatment, but she would concentrate on the emotional needs of people with AIDS or other serious illnesses. For two and a half years, she worked as the program director for the Manhattan Center for Living, a now defunct organization founded by Marianne Williamson. Changes in the philosophy and the operation of the Manhattan Center led O'Neal, Mike Nichols, and two young men, Jon Guttman and John Juska, to found Friends In Deed, in 1991.

Friends, as its supporters call it, offers workshops and outreach assistance, all free of charge. Its heart is the large group session that O'Neal herself conducts every Monday and Tuesday evening at the organization's hospitable center, in SoHo. The evening somewhat resembles a twelve-step A.A. meeting: people speak about their attempts to cope with what the day or the week has presented. O'Neal keeps the meeting going—commenting, consoling, dispensing wisdom. But she blanches at the thought of being seen as a guru or a mother figure or anything other than someone who has undergone her own share of struggles—among them adjusting to life without her husband, who died last June—and is attempting to impart what she has learned.

"I realize that she is transformed," Nichols says. "She is someone new now, as well, of course, as the old Cynthia."

PRYOR ENGAGEMENT

If ever there was a book party in danger of lapsing into excessive solemnity, it was Richard Pryor's, held the other day at Georgia, a restaurant on Melrose Avenue in Hollywood. A spirited crowd had gathered on the patio in the early-evening sunshine when the comedian rolled in in his motorized wheelchair. Pryor is a startling sight these days. Multiple sclerosis has weakened and shrunk him so that his collar hangs loosely around his neck and his wispy fingers sit lightly on the steering wheel of his chair. The guests welcomed him with a reverent hush.

His friends, however, knew that silence was the last thing Pryor needed or wanted. Todd Gold, a writer for *People* and the co-author of "Pryor Convictions," smiled as he watched well-wishers tread nervously near a round table where Pryor was holding court. "You know, for the first three months we worked together, Rich was horrible," Gold said. "He didn't get out of bed. So I told him, 'No matter what you do, I'm going to just keep coming back here.' One of the turning points was when we decided to get out of the house and go see Little Richard at the House of Blues. He finally got to go somewhere where people weren't doing a tribute to him."

Robin Williams, too, has been in close touch with Pryor, and after spending a few minutes needling the guest of honor he reminisced about Pryor's famous irascibility. "There was this one night in the late seventies when we were both doing The Comedy Store here, and the crowd started yelling for him to do Mudbone," Williams said, referring to Pryor's seminal comedic alter ego. "Richard didn't want to, so he just started screaming back at them, 'Fuck you! You know it better than me. You do it!' People loved it. They went crazy."

Presiding at Pryor's table was Jennifer Lee, one of his six ex-wives, who now works with him as a sort of general aide-de-camp. She recalled, "We were married in 1981 and '82, you know, after he shot the car"—an event that is not, of course, to be confused with the time he set himself on fire. Like Pryor's book and so much of his life (which began with his upbringing in a Peoria brothel), the marriage with Lee was alternately harrowing and hilarious. "He was abusive in our marriage and generally impossible, but the fact is I've always loved him," she said. "Now God has told him to slow down." With a benevolent smile, Lee handed Pryor another of his beloved "toonies"—Martinis.

As the crowd of guests thinned, Pryor reflected on the strange turns his life has taken. "I done a lot of bad shit, but that's me," he said in a tremulous whisper. "I never pretended otherwise. I told the truth, even when it didn't make me look good. That's all my comedy ever was." Then he flashed his diminished but still unmistakable scowl of indignation, and added, "Shit, people should like me."

THE CRITIC AT LARGE

THERE are rarities in the art world, like having a sheet of Leonardo da Vinci sketches come up at auction, and then there are extreme rarities, like running into the robust critic Robert Hughes at an art opening. "I'm just showing the flag," Hughes said the other night at a black-tie party for "Antipodean Currents," an exhibition of artists from his homeland, Australia, at the downtown outpost of the Guggenheim Museum, on the corner of Broadway and Prince. "It's the first opening I've been at for—oh, fifteen years."

About openings in general Hughes had this to say: "Either you run into people who want something from you—you see them coming across the room, like ewes through the long grass, with that look in their eye. They're about to tell you about that mandatory exhibition they're having at the Such-and-Such Gallery. And then there are the people you've given nasty reviews to or whose artists you've given nasty reviews to or whose allies you've given nasty reviews to." Hughes made a sound closely approximating the nowadays seldom heard "Ugh!" and added, "To me, the art opening is in principle a fairly satanic ritual."

LOBBYING

IAN SCHRAGER'S new Delano Hotel—pool by Philippe Starck, gym by David Barton, restaurant by Brian McNally and Madonna, and alchemy by Schrager, of Studio 54 fame—which opened for business in Miami Beach last week, will continue the transformation of the resort strip from a place of shuffleboarding retirees to a hot spot for the tanned and firm. The replacement of old with young seems to be something of a habit for the hotelier: in New York, he already counts Morgans Hotel, the Royalton, and the Paramount Hotel among his portfolio of trendsetting properties. But in one Schrager enterprise, at least, some vestiges of the past remain.

At the Paramount, on West Forty-sixth Street, an elderly woman, Ellen, is discussing the oversized headboards depicting Vermeer's "The Lacemaker" which dominate most of the hotel's rooms. "I wouldn't want that big thing above my bed," she says. "It's all right for people who come here for two or three days, but this is my home." An incongruous presence in the Starck-designed lobby, Ellen is one of a handful of elderly people who chose to stay in their rent-controlled rooms rather than accept a payoff in 1986, when the Paramount, then an S.R.O., was bought by the Morgans Hotel Group. Like friendly ghosts, these unlikely residents appear momentarily in the lobby and then retire back into the shadows. They are an odd cast of characters, known but not known. Among them is Mrs. J., who hasn't left her room in five years and has all her meals delivered, and Mr. Ed, an elegant old man in a three-piece suit and fedora with a reputation as a ladies' man and a fondness for the track, the Catskills, and ballroom dancing.

For thirty years now, Ellen has surveyed the ebb and flow at the Paramount—a constant, with her slippers and blue-and-pink striped housecoat, in contrast to the transient styles all around her. "Would you look at that!" she shrieks, alerting the bellboys to new arrivals dressed in the faded black uniform of the record business. "You can't judge people by the way they dress anymore," she declares, to no one in particular. "Years ago, when you checked into a hotel you were very well groomed. Today, they come in looking like—oh God. The more holes they've got in their dungarees, the better they're doing. A boy came in recently with big wide pants, and I found out he made a couple of million dollars from his records."

Sometimes Ellen threatens to stay in the lobby and sleep on the sofas unless something or other is done, but the concierges humor her gently. She is an object of affection for the bellboys (her birthday is remembered), and even for the gay male staffers, whom she berates and threatens to supply with "nice girls." Thanks to her white hair, dark-circled eyes, heavy New York accent, and proprietary bearing, she is often mistaken for part of the management.

Across the lobby, another old-timer, Mr. Z., sits slumped in his favorite green armchair in the shadow of a vast arrangement of yellow irises. Mr. Z., who resembles Groucho Marx in a trenchcoat and baseball cap, played right wing for a famous Viennese-Jewish soccer team, Hakoah, in the twenties; later, he established a ladies'-wear boutique in Brooklyn. Though Mr. Z. and Ellen live on the same floor, they do not get along: she sits down in his chair; he complains that she shouts in her room.

"It's a different atmosphere here," Ellen concludes on her way upstairs. Eying the arrival of a new tour group laden with Fifth Avenue shopping bags, she says, "Times change, people change, but it's not so bad." With that, she disappears into the elevator and is gone. ♦

This week's contributors: James Traub, Brendan Lemon, Jeffrey Toobin, Anthony Haden-Guest, Edward Helmore.

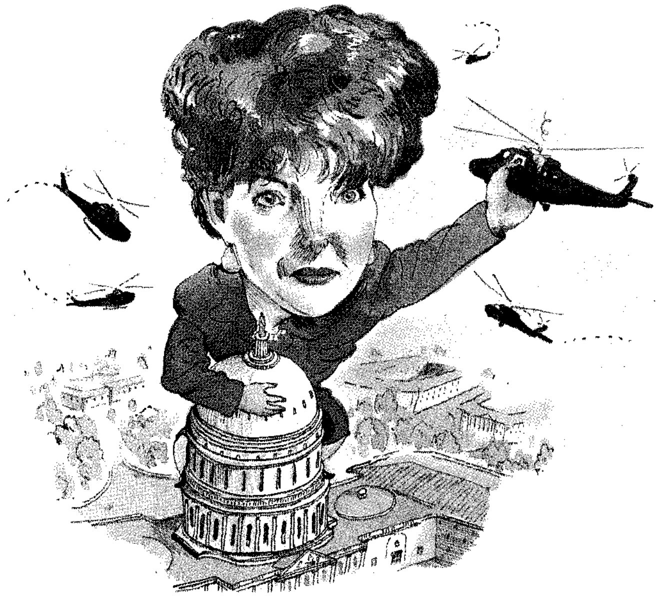
THE POLITICAL SCENE

HER OWN PRIVATE IDAHO

No one personifies the rise of the radical fringe in Republican politics quite like Representative Helen Chenoweth, the new scourge of the House.

BY SIDNEY BLUMENTHAL

WHAT could be more intoxicating, this season in Washington, than to be a brand-new Republican member of the House of Representatives? The Party's freshman class, untouched by the now receding decades of Republican futility in the House, has known only the rush of the Contract with America and its Hundred Days; and few of its members have reason to be giddier than Helen Chenoweth, of Idaho. Back home, Chenoweth was a persistent right-wing activist often shunted aside by the big boys of the local G.O.P., but in Newt Gingrich's Washington, where denouncing the federal government has become too routine to qualify as news, Chenoweth has managed to make herself the most famous member of the class of '94 (apart from Sonny Bono).



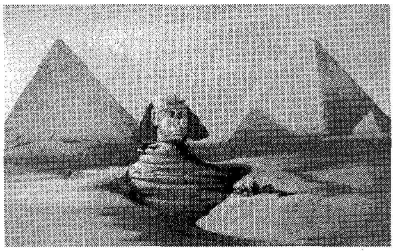
Chenoweth: battling environmentalism, the federal government, and the mysterious phenomenon of "black helicopters."

BARRY BLITT

What distinguishes Chenoweth's conservatism from the off-the-rack variety is not only its vehemence and its extremism but also its eclecticism and its exotically Western regional flavor. She is at the convergence of numerous right-wing movements: those of the anti-environmentalists and the religious right, the advocates of states' rights, the citizens' militias, the gun owners and the "county sovereignty" anarchists, the home-schoolers and the property-rights libertarians. She has not been an opportunist cannily using these movements as vehicles for momentary political gain: long before she ever exhibited any ambition to run for office, she was helping to organize them. Her ascent is a case study in the activism that helped carry her party to power last November. "We're fighting for our freedoms and our liberties, and our way of life. We're fighting for our culture," she explained to me. "And our way of life out here is something that in the East they can't fathom."

On March 17th, after two months of Gingrichian frenzy in the capital, Chenoweth returned to Idaho for her début as congressman for the First District. (She insists on being called "congress*man*" because, as she explained on Pat Robertson's "700 Club" on the eve of being sworn in, only that form of the title commands respect.) Speaker Gingrich has appointed her, along with a handful of other gun-control opponents, to a Republican Firearms Legislation Task Force, and, using that ad-hoc designation, she made her return an event.

At the Boise City Hall, she organized an all-day hearing devoted to one of the most important items on her political



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agenda: "In the Matter of Excessive Use of Government Force." Seated next to her were Idaho's lieutenant governor, C. L. (Butch) Otter, and its secretary of state, Pete Cenarrusa. The witnesses had been assembled to recount apparently disparate incidents that Chenoweth seems to interpret as evidence that the federal government intimidates ordinary people, sometimes with exotic weapons.

In her opening remarks, Chenoweth said, "We have democracy when the government is afraid of the people." The day's testimony showed what kind of fear she had in mind. The first witness was the attorney Garry Gilman, who represents Randy Weaver, the Christian Identity neo-Nazi from Ruby Ridge, Idaho; Weaver became an icon for the far right in 1992 when he engaged in an armed confrontation with federal marshals in which his wife, his son, and a marshal were killed. "My agenda today is to do everything that I can to emphasize the critical need there is for reining in the use of force, particularly by so-called élite paramilitary police organizations in the United States," Gilman said. Chenoweth praised him and asked no questions.

A stream of speakers followed, most of them conservative activists in the anti-environmentalist Wise Use movement (which Chenoweth had helped organize), who denounced environmental laws as tools of government tyranny and enforced economic decline. Brett Barsalou, a county sheriff, testified about an incident that has acquired epic status in the annals of antigovernment anecdotage. The villain of his story, and of several told that day, was the Fish and Wildlife Service of the Interior Department. Last January, the service introduced fifteen wolves into the central Idaho wilderness—a step vehemently opposed by ranchers. One wolf was found shot. When three Fish and Wildlife agents came to investigate, the rancher who owned the land on which the wolf was killed refused to coöperate and called the local sheriff; the sheriff took his side, and the agents left. Barsalou spoke of the "potential" for "violence" and called for disarming federal agents. (In newspaper accounts of the incident, the agents described a rock-throwing rancher and an intimidating sheriff.) Chenoweth praised Barsalou and suggested that the agents had lied.

Chenoweth had also invited some representatives of the federal government, and she questioned one of them, David McKinney, the special agent in charge of the Northwest region of the National Marine Fisheries Service, a branch of the Commerce Department, about the existence of "black helicopters." In the universe of the paranoid right, there is no more dreaded symbol than the black helicopter, the stealth weapon of the government overlords, swooping down to impose a New World Order. Although the helicopters' existence has never been proved, Chenoweth had voiced her concerns on the subject a month earlier at a hearing of the House Subcommittee on Resource Conservation, and she warned James Lyons, the Under-Secretary of Agriculture for Natural Resources and Environment, that she would make herself his "worst nightmare" unless "this type of activity ceases." McKinney replied that he knew nothing about any such machines. Another witness, Frank Nesmith, the bureau chief of enforcement for the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, explained that a helicopter was indeed shown in the background of a poster for Citizens Against Poaching, issued by the Idaho Conservation Officers Association, and that helicopters had been used occasionally the year before by the department "instead of sending two guys on horses for twelve days in the backcountry." But these were rented civilian helicopters, and they were not black.

Later, Samuel Sherwood, the leader of the United States Militia Association, a group based in Blackfoot, Idaho, stepped forward to read the lengthy credo of his group. (After the hearing, according to Sherwood, Chenoweth met with him.) Finally, Gary DeMott, the founder of the Idaho Sovereignty Association, which asserts the supremacy of county and state authority over federal law, remarked about the United States government, "Folks, what we're talking about here is that Hitler's S.S. never had it so good." Chenoweth closed the proceedings by pledging to insert a transcript of them into the *Congressional Record.*

THE theme of tyrannical government was one that Helen Chenoweth had fastened on from the start. Within days of taking her seat in Congress, she began work on a bill she entitled the Civil Rights Act of 1995. She sought co-sponsors by circulating a series of "Dear Colleague" letters, all headlined, "Stop The Tragedies By The Bureau Of Alcohol, Tobacco And Firearms And Other Federal Enforcement Agencies With A Little Common Sense." The bill itself decreed that, with certain exceptions, "A Federal official shall not engage in a designated law enforcement action in a State except pursuant to a valid written permission to do so, received from the appropriate local or State official before the action commences."

The bill's targets—in addition to the far right's biggest bugaboo, the Treasury Department's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms—were branches of the federal service more apt to be portrayed in children's nature stories than in thrillers or detective novels: the Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the Park Service.

In the West this spring, tensions between these agencies and scattered locals angry at what they saw as illegitimate federal power were reaching critical mass. Threats and intimidating acts against federal agents were being reported with increasing frequency. On March 10th, the Idaho state director of the federal Bureau of Land Management sent out a memo on "Safety Guidance": "As you are probably aware, so-called 'County Supremacy' or 'States Rights' movements have been gaining momentum across the western United States. . . . These movements have recently been manifested in the form of threats, intimidation, and violence toward federal employees." B.L.M. employees were urged always to "maintain radio contact" and to travel in pairs. "If you are arrested and placed in custody by State or local authorities, while engaged in your official duties," the memo advised, "cooperate, do not resist, and contact the U.S. Attorney's Office as soon as possible." In late March, a Forest Service office in Carson City, Nevada, was bombed; the building was severely damaged, but no one was hurt.

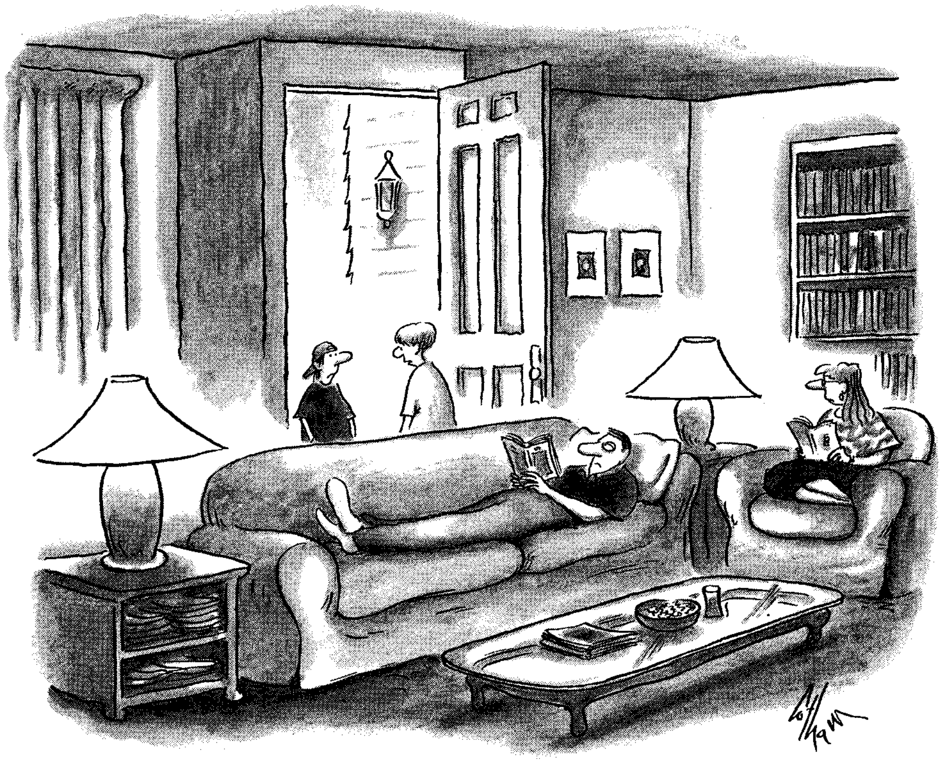
Three weeks later, as the world knows, a bomb tore apart the federal building in Oklahoma City, killing a hundred and sixty-seven people. When the principal suspect turned out to be a fellow-traveller of the militias, many politicians rushed to deplore the movement and its belief in the imminence of civil war. Chenoweth took a different tack, suggesting that the government was ultimately to blame for the bombing. "While we can never condone this, we still must begin to look at the public policies that may be pushing people too far," she told the Coeur d'Alene *Press*. "I'm not willing to condemn militias," she told the *Idaho Statesman*, the leading newspaper in the state. ("Whether she realizes it or not," the paper had editorialized, "Chenoweth is quickly becoming the poster child" for the militias.) "I am thoroughly disgusted by the attempts of various opportunistic individuals to capitalize on this event to further a political agenda," she said, in a press release. In short order, she found herself invited to appear on "Face the Nation" and the network news shows. Some Republican leaders in the state advised her to steer clear of the militia issue and to concentrate on economics and the environment. She thanked and ignored them. "She revels in the attention," one Republican politico said. At the June conference of the Idaho Republican Party central committee, a number of members asked quietly, "What do we do about Helen?"

WHEN I visited Chenoweth at her district office in Boise recently, I found a composed, pleasant-looking woman with a short, soft haircut and a breathy, insistent voice. She is fifty-seven years old, the mother of two children and the grandmother of six. In contrast to her affable appearance, her office was furnished with stark ideological touches. On display in a glass case near the door were T-shirts that bore the mottoes "Idaho's Endangered Species—Working People and Their Families" and "Bill of Rights—Void Where Prohibited by Law." On the wall, a framed quotation from Patrick Henry, the Revolutionary patriot and fervent opponent of the ratification of the Constitution, proclaimed the Christian essence of the nation.

Ever since Chenoweth's public statements about the militias, there has been a lot of speculation in Idaho about how much support she has received from them. Everyone I spoke to in political circles there said that militia members had served as volunteers in the Chenoweth campaign, but no one really knew how many there had been. In previous interviews, Chenoweth has acknowledged meeting with militia members, but when I asked her she replied in an understated way. "You know, I hardly know who they are," she said. "I've never spoken to a militia group. I understand that there were some members who belonged to a militia group that worked in my campaign. But to this day I don't know who they are. I am not always comfortable with the rhetoric I hear from the militias. But," she added, for balance, "I'm not always comfortable with *The New Yorker*."

Two weeks later, Sam Sherwood, the United States Militia Association leader, told me that two years ago he interviewed Chenoweth a couple of times on a radio talk show he hosted on an Idaho Falls AM station. "I encouraged her to run for Congress," he said. He claimed that he put a thousand volunteers into the field to work on her campaign—a figure that no one I spoke to could verify. He considers Chenoweth a politician worthy of his cause, but not Gingrich, who "doesn't get it," he says. "Any Republican or Democrat that can get along with Bill Clinton is on his way out. It's either that or it's going to be a full-scale bloody revolution. Fortunately, Helen Chenoweth can see the handwriting on the wall. She's trying to be a voice of reason. . . . When they ignore her, we're going to have trouble in River City. You're going to see Waco Two, Three, Four. Alamo Two, Three, Four. You're not going to come to my door and kick it in without a search warrant. . . . If Bill Clinton tries to pull it off, he's going to need more than car barricades all around the White House. . . . There's going to be a war. There *is* a war."

The southeastern part of Idaho, which is the base of the United States Militia Association, has always been a breeding ground for extremism. In the nineteen-sixties and seventies, it was a stronghold of the John Birch Society and of the Posse Comitatus, a militia forerunner. Sherwood's loose talk of "war" may be lurid, but it is common among rightists out West. Chenoweth frequently uses the metaphor of war, even holy war, as a standard stump device to describe the supposed conflict between the citizenry and the environ-



"I'm spending the day with my aging parents."

mentalists. The notion of a "war on the West," in fact, has been relentlessly promoted as a rhetorical trope by the right since Clinton's election, and the phrase has been used by many Republican politicians, including Bob Dole. But few of them seem to take it quite as literally as Chenoweth does.

She likes to invoke an idyllic frontier that is being oppressed by an occupying government. The truth is that there would scarcely be a local economy without the government's intricate web of maintenance and subsidies. No group in the country is more dependent on federal support than Westerners. Without the federal provision of water, rangeland, infrastructure, and fire control, much of the settled part of the West would be a desert. But the inescapability of government and its ubiquity make possible its demonization as the enemy of the rugged individual. The Old West mythology has been dusted off by a new Republican Party, which emerged full-blown in Idaho with the election of Helen Chenoweth. "Helen is a product of her times. It was the right place, right context," Chuck Cushman, one of the chief organizers of the Wise Use movement, who has known her for years, said. He went on to say, of the Secretary of the Interior, "Bruce Babbitt tried to say there was a new West. The Old West voted in November."

THE EXPANDING UNIVERSE: TWO VIEWS

I
But if *Everything's* moving, then
"fixity" doesn't exist. The room
in which we now lie
races through space; the moon's
orbit skids into in-
finity like a pitched horseshoe
and I who will love you
always won't always be I
nor you you. . .

II
Let it move, then. Even so,
some *Brake* held it back
long enough to produce Space-
and-Time and for these to fill
with all of Astronomy
and History, keeping track
of certain fidelities:
Launce and his dog; Orion and his;
the noon's and the night's face;
even thought itself, although
too often centrifugal,
condemned nonetheless
to continuity.

—Peter Kane Dufault

AFTER Watergate, in 1975, the Republican Party in Idaho was a shell. In terms of party identification, it ranked third, after the Democrats and independents. No politician with a reputation to wager would gladly take on the task of running the state G.O.P. That year, its chairmanship had fallen on Vern Ravenscroft, a rancher, former Democrat, and former state legislator, who ran twice for gubernatorial nomination and lost. The new executive director was the chairman of the Republican Party in Clearwater County, Helen Chenoweth. Clearwater County was Democratic turf, and Chenoweth had had no previous political job. She had been divorced that year from Nick Chenoweth, a lawyer and aviation entrepreneur, who had been involved in Republican politics since the early sixties. Helen was "becoming well known for her hard work and strong will," Nick Chenoweth told me. That will was expressed in an intense, unyielding conservatism. But after two years as state G.O.P. director Helen left for another job—she was pushed out, according to Idaho Republican sources, as a result of conflicts with Party regulars.

In 1977, Helen went to work as an aide for a friend of Nick's named Steven Symms, a Republican representative with a slashing, caustic style. Symms was a crusader against environmental legislation and gun control—he once brandished pistols on the House floor. Chenoweth worked in his Boise office, lasting about a year before she was fired. (Symms, who now runs the Freedom Alliance, a right-wing group in Virginia created by Oliver North, endorsed an opponent of Chenoweth in last year's congressional primary.)

Chenoweth's next incarnation, in 1978, was in a Boise office with "Consulting Associates" stencilled on the door. Her partner was Vern Ravenscroft. Much of their income came from small-mine owners and farmers they helped to acquire hydropower. But Consulting Associates also set itself up in the business of political organizing, attacking the legitimacy of federal regulation of public lands and the environment. Chenoweth and Ravenscroft were also partners in a group, Sagebrush Rebellion, Inc., which stirred up anger and clients.

They were capitalizing on the Sagebrush Rebellion, a new movement of conservative Western leaders demanding that control of federally managed lands be transferred to the states, where extensive privatization might take place. Through these activities Chenoweth met Chuck Cushman, an itinerant anti-environmental activist who was paid by corporations and property owners to arouse grassroots opposition to federal agencies. His firebrand rhetoric and the turmoil he often left behind him earned him the label Rent-a-Riot, a title that he once said he "loved." Chenoweth travelled with Cushman on some of his campaigns against federal employees. She "enjoyed my tactics," he told me. "I came up with some creative ideas." In one of them, he says, "I suggested we get a bulldozer, get a crowd, charge people to drive the bulldozer. Ironically, it's almost the same thing Dick Carver did in Nye County." He was referring to a signal event for the county-supremacy movement that took place last July 4th in Nye County, Nevada. Dick Carver, the county commissioner, bulldozed an illegal road through public land in defiance of Forest Rangers, to the cheers of an armed crowd he had assembled. (Chenoweth and Carver were both scheduled to appear last weekend at a rally in Lewiston, Idaho, demanding that the state take over the management of federal land.)

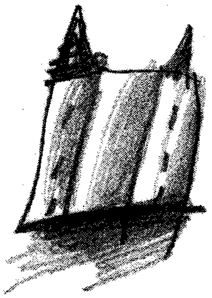
In 1980, Chenoweth created an independent expenditure committee to produce negative ads against the incumbent Democratic United States Senator Frank Church, one of the most prominent Western progressives. Church's challenger was Steven Symms. In every way, the two men represented opposite traditions in Idaho politics—on the environment, education, government, and civility. At the same time, Ronald Reagan endorsed the Sagebrush Rebellion in his Presidential campaign. The conservative tide of 1980 swept away Idaho's Democrats. And after the election Reagan appointed the anti-environmental activist James Watt as Secretary of the Interior. But the Administration, Chenoweth told me, promised it "could solve all the problems." The movement deferred to its champions in Washington, "and so they diminished the Sagebrush Rebellion; by about three years after Reagan was elected there was no Sagebrush Rebellion." In her view, the Reagan Revolution was a revolution squandered.

In 1986, Chenoweth was hired by Lieutenant Governor David Leroy to run his gubernatorial campaign. She showed herself to be a fierce factional fighter, and became known in Idaho political circles, I was told, as "the black widow." After two months, she had alienated many influential Republican figures, and her third job in party politics ended with another firing.

Back at Consulting Associates, Chenoweth deepened her involvement with the conservative movement. In the early eighties, she had met a writer named Ron Arnold, who was working on an authorized biography of James Watt. "She was very passionate in her beliefs," Arnold told me recently. His goal was to do away with all government regulation, federal and state, and to "destroy the environmental movement" in the process. In 1988, Arnold, operating out of the Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise, a conservative watchdog organization, called a conference to found what he dubbed the Wise Use movement. The name was a triumph of marketing inspiration and political mockery: it appropriated a phrase from the conservationists' founding father, Gifford Pinchot. Organizationally, the movement was a nexus of large resource firms, trade associations, and right-wing groups. Arnold was quoted as having told a strategy session, "Issues don't matter. Mastery of activism is all that matters. I want to create killer activists."

Armed with lavish corporate funding and the doctrine that public lands should be opened to large-scale commercial exploitation, the Wise Use movement organized pseudo-populist groups across the West. The Grassroots Endangered Species Act Coalition, for example, includes dozens of Wise Use groups, from the Arizona Association of Mining Districts to the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation. Chenoweth attended a number of the Wise Use conferences and was a roving organizer. "We became personal friends," Arnold said. "She'd call up and say, 'Well, what do you think about this policy here?' " And she echoed Arnold when she spoke at the Wise Use Leadership Conference in 1993 about "spiritual war" with environmentalists.

At the same time that Chenoweth was helping to organize Wise Use, she was founding the principal religious-right groups in Idaho. In 1989, the Family Policy Council sent Dennis Mansfield, a California Republican political operative and building-industry lobbyist, to Idaho to set up an affiliate called the Idaho Family Forum. He had difficulty establishing himself until Chenoweth intervened. In 1990, Governor Cecil Andrus, a Democrat, vetoed a stringent anti-abortion bill. "The pro-family community was bruised," Mansfield said. Chenoweth arranged for him to meet local pro-life activists. "As a result of that meeting, they gave their endorsement and approval for me to be included in the pro-family movement in Idaho," he said.



Chenoweth, who had not seemed particularly religious, was now a devout Christian. She became a deacon at a charismatic church, which has lately experimented with "the Toronto Blessing"—an expression of the holy spirit also called "the laughing revival." Instead of speaking in tongues, some members of the congregation giggle and laugh, sometimes for hours.

CHENOWETH'S rapid ascent in the 1994 congressional race shook Idaho's political world. The First District incumbent was Larry LaRocco, a moderate Democrat, who voted against gun control. Chenoweth's opponents in the Republican primary included David Leroy (whose campaign she had run eight years earlier) and F. Ron McMurray, the former manager of the river port of Lewiston. The Republican establishment divided its support between them, and one or the other was regarded as the likely nominee. But Chenoweth had a ready-made field organization, drawn from the Wise Use and religious-right movements, that could not be matched by the others. "When I started helping her raise money, not many people took her seriously," Chuck Cushman said. But "she had been building contacts for years." Her campaign was bolstered by a large-scale, last-minute media buy made possible by the sale of a quarter interest in a piece of property she owned. The share, assessed, for tax purposes, at ten thousand five hundred dollars, was bought for sixty thousand by Allen Ball, a wealthy supporter who wanted to mine silver in the Sawtooth National Recreational Area—a goal that Chenoweth vowed to pursue. All the anti-environmental groups, including the Idaho State Snowmobile Association and the Hells Canyon Alliance of recreational boaters, rallied behind her. "Helen's a hand-grenade thrower," said Sandra Mitchell, a director of the Snowmobile Association.

Another factor on the right also contributed to Chenoweth's victory: the John Birch Society. In the nineteen-sixties, the Birch Society's participation in the Republican Party and the conservative movement was a convulsive question. The Birchers—tightly organized in mimicry of the Communist Party, highly conspiratorial in outlook, bizarrely certain that Dwight Eisenhower was a Communist agent—were threatening to define the right. Sensing the peril they posed, William F. Buckley, Jr., led a strenuous effort to purge them from the conservative movement. Republican leaders, fearful of being tainted, followed his lead. After the Goldwater campaign of 1964, the Birch Society seemed to disappear. But in Idaho, it only receded.

Chenoweth had been close to the Birch Society for years. She engaged in national speaking tours before Birch chapters and front groups. Her first congressional-campaign manager, Dave Wilkinson, was a Bircher. The Birch Society "was one of many ingredients" in her campaign, he told me. "She put together a whole different party."

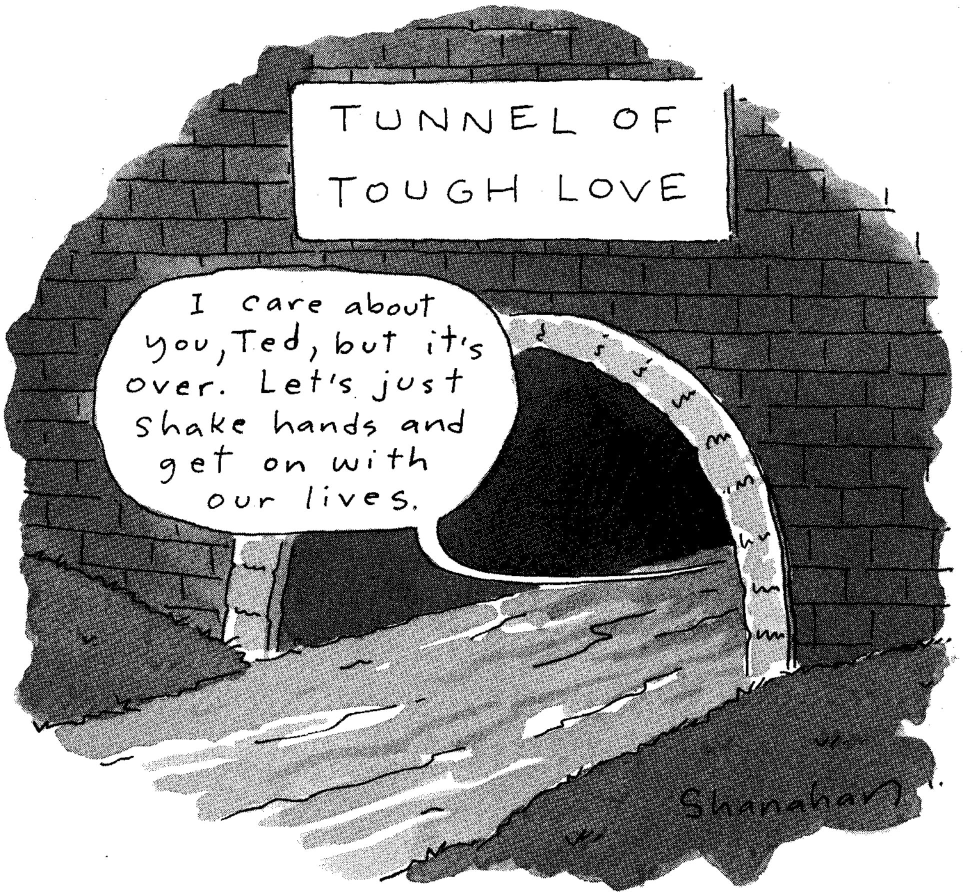
In her campaign, Chenoweth wove together the themes of the various movements. With Cushman once as a special attraction, she held "endangered-salmon bakes" as fund-raisers in derision of the Endangered Species Act. "We're loving our forests to death," she said. She also characterized an anti-gay-rights initiative put on the ballot by religious-right groups as "very healthy."

The divide in the election was not merely political; it was spiritual. In an hour-long speech delivered in a church, and videotaped, she spoke of war: "Always in the past armies have clashed. We've had physical lines of battle. . . . We've seen countries conquered. . . . We are in a battle today that is far more insidious and dangerous as far as conquering our people and our soul than we have ever faced before, because the battle lines are invisible." But Chenoweth could see the outline of the struggle. "These environmentalists are driven by a certain set of esoteric concepts with all the trappings of religious dogma. They believe that nature is God; where we know that God Himself created nature. And there comes the conflict. . . . A measure of where we are in this spiritual battle is that the whole scenario had flipped upside down. Regulatory and case law is now governing in such a manner that God is governed out of our classrooms and God is governed out of so many of the governmental institutions that are so important in this country."

Chenoweth explained the historical background. The darkness began to set in when "a man by the name of Marx developed something he called a Communist Manifesto." She then launched an attack on Eisenhower, a Birch leitmotiv. "Our President had an agreement with Stalin that if any of the satellite countries rose up in rebellion against Russia we were not to assist them." In this sacred struggle, "we're facing an unlawful government from time to time," she said. "That's a reality we must face. What if there's no place left to go?" Chenoweth summoned her audience to battle: "Our land has been taken. It's time we reclaim our land."

The LaRocco campaign hoped that her rhetoric would tar her as an extremist. But her unrelenting focus on environmentalism and the government as the source of economic imperilment made her appealing to many traditionally Democratic working-class voters. "Her campaign and the G.O.P. did an excellent job of capitalizing on people's uncertainties and fears about their continuing employment," said Randy Ambuehl, the president of the Idaho State A.F.L.-C.I.O. "They've made the perceived enemy the environmental community and federal-government regulations. . . . The most startling statistic for Idaho is that forty-four per cent of the births are paid for by Medicaid. A lot of our social problems go back to our income-distribution levels. Frustration, fear, and despair—when you're moving to the bottom, that characterizes it."

In a conservative state, in the most favorable year for conservative values since 1980, Chenoweth had all the conservative movements laboring in the field for her. The Idaho Family Forum, for its part, distributed on the order of three hundred thousand voter guides, covering a majority of those who turned out. "Helen's election was assured the minute those voter guides were printed," Dennis Mansfield, of the Idaho Family Forum, said. The Ross Perot organization, still intact, worked on her behalf, and nearly ninety per cent of its members voted for her. The home-school movement, closely aligned with the religious right, put hundreds of volunteers into her campaign, according to one Republican operative. The state's National Rifle Association affiliate came to her aid, even though LaRocco had the endorsement of the national N.R.A. because of his flawless voting record. And right-wing talk radio, a new force, flooded the airwaves. "I don't think any-


TUNNEL OF TOUGH LOVE
I care about you, Ted, but it's over. Let's just shake hands and get on with our lives.
Shanahan

body grasped how important it is," said Tom Knappenberger, LaRocco's press secretary. "You can't buy the equivalent. It's all generated this undercurrent of hostility." On Election Day, Chenoweth won resoundingly, with fifty-five per cent of the vote.

Her victory was not only a triumph of the conservative movement within Idaho but also a leading national indicator. Idaho's congressional delegation is in the vanguard of Western conservatives who hope to eviscerate environmental laws, clearing the way for mining, timber, and ranching interests. Senator Dirk Kempthorne is trying to gut the Endangered Species Act, and Senator Larry Craig, a board member of the National Rifle Association, has demanded that federal agents who watch over the national forests and wildlife refuges be disarmed. Chenoweth believes in the same policies, but her tactics are those of a movement activist, not a clubman.

She quickly demonstrated that the courtesies freshmen normally pay their elders meant little to her. On May 22nd, Pete Domenici, Republican of New Mexico, who is the chairman of the Senate Budget Committee and who had campaigned for her in Idaho, called her to discuss his Livestock Grazing Act of 1995, offered as an alternative to the measures advocated by Bruce Babbitt. Chenoweth accused him of permitting Babbitt to write his bill and "selling the ranchers down the river." Domenici was furious. "You have your opinion and I have mine," he said. The following day, he had called a meeting of senators and representatives who supported his bill. Chenoweth was not invited by his office, but she heard about the meeting and showed up. She denounced Domenici's bill and charged that it would destroy the ranching industry. "There's a person here who thinks she knows better than the rest of us, but that's not correct," Domenici replied. Chenoweth continued arguing. (For her part, Chenoweth claims that the discussions never got antagonistic.) Later, at a dinner party, Domenici fumed about her and, shaking his head in disbelief, told another guest, "We're going to move ahead in spite of her." A few days afterward, Chuck Cushman sent a fax around Capitol Hill and to Wise Use groups which repeated Chenoweth's accusations. Conservatives demanded to know why Domenici was controlled by Babbitt. And Domenici's staff is still coping with an influx of Chenoweth's visiting constituents, who have come to complain that he is mistreating her.

Chenoweth's abrasive conflict with Domenici may have sharply limited her ability to be an effective legislator. In Idaho, the Party stalwarts are more disturbed by her theatrics than by her agenda. Some are distressed enough to be discussing, even at this early date, a primary challenge to her. "Everybody I talk to is still shaking their heads," said Douglas Dorn, a financial manager who ran for the G.O.P. gubernatorial nomination last year and is contemplating running against Chenoweth in 1996. "I think she's catering to a very narrow portion of the First District's constituents—the far, far right. I don't know what percentage that is. If it's fifty per cent, I won't run against her. If it isn't, I might." Meanwhile, her rigid, closed manner has apparently diminished her staff: five of her aides have quit or been fired so far.

But conservative activists are thrilled with her approach. They see her as almost invulnerable. Dennis Mansfield said exultantly, "It's a very different Republican Party. Neither Dole nor Gramm has a fix on what's happening. They're going to be the Hubert Humphreys of the nineties. Helen Chenoweth is literally the point man of a new Republican Party."

On weekends, Chenoweth typically leaves Washington, but Idaho is only occasionally her destination. She is a frequent flier to right-wing gatherings across the country, and is received by them with adulation. In early June, she travelled to Salt Lake City to appear as a featured speaker at the Rocky Mountain Rally for God. On the platform, she was introduced by Dale Pearce, a leader of the John Birch Society in Idaho. "She got a standing ovation," Pearce said. "People fall in love with this gal. She's a Joan of Arc." ♦

Sexist expression. Avoid using Dame except as a British title.—*Microsoft Word for Windows grammar check of the sentence "I graduated from the University of Notre Dame."*

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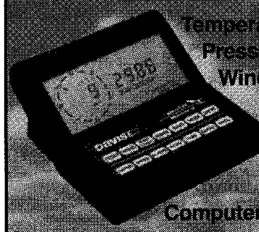

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ANNALS OF JUSTICE

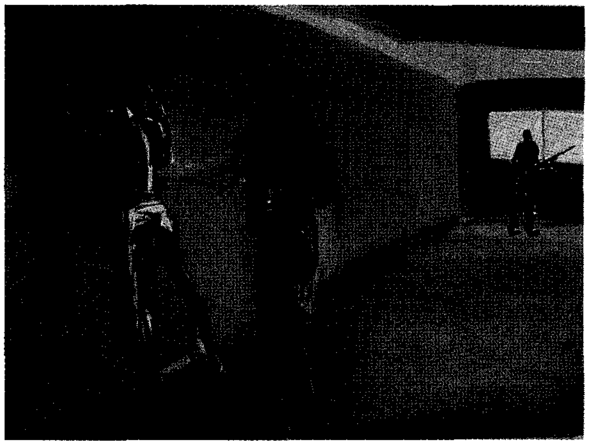
TEACHING PRISONERS A LESSON

An amendment to the crime bill ends one of the most successful inmate-rehabilitation programs—and reopens the debate over what prisons are for.

BY JAMES S. KUNEN

THIRTY miles upriver from New York City, the Hudson broadens into a three-mile-wide inland sea. Rocky cliffs soar five hundred feet above the western shore, and the water, earth, and sky manifest an elemental beauty, as though God had been there just a moment before. Recently, on a bluff above the river's eastern edge, fifteen graduating seniors, proudly attired in the gowns and blue-and-white hoods of Westchester's Mercy College, marched to a jazz combo's lively interpretation of "Pomp and Circumstance" into a makeshift auditorium for their commencement. After sitting through a number of speeches, they stepped forward to receive the bachelor of science diplomas that would admit them to the company of educated men. Along with twenty-five graduates awarded associate's degrees by Mercy and by Bronx Community College, they posed for snapshots with the hundred or so family members and friends in attendance and enjoyed a festive Chinese dinner. Then, as the fading twilight silhouetted a filigree of chain link and barbed wire along the windows, they passed through an orange steel door, stripped, bent over, and spread their buttocks for a body search. With these rites, fifteen years of liberal-arts education at the Sing Sing Correctional Facility—along with most on-site higher-education programs for prison inmates across the United States—ended. An amendment to the 1994 crime bill has banned federal grants to prisoners for post-secondary education after June 30th.

Of course, prison programs of every sort, from drug counselling to medical care, are being slashed as get-tough-on-crime politicians shift the focus of corrections departments from rehabilitation to retribution and deterrence. But to many of the prisoners education is not just another program; it is the ultimate source of power from which they and their communities have historically been cut off. "Being denied education in society is part of what brought us here in the first place," Cardell (Blood) Shaird, an avuncular fifty-year-old resident of Sing Sing, explained to me recently. He has been in prison for sixteen years, having been convicted of murder. ("I was arguing with this big guy. I'm thinking, If he was in jail he'd be washing my underwear. The next thing I know I've shot the guy. I was so high, I'd be lying if I told you I remembered what we were arguing about.") Shaird, who dropped out of high school in the twelfth grade, earned a bachelor's degree in library science from Skidmore's University Without Walls while he was at the Great Meadows Correctional Facility, in Comstock, New York, and got a master of professional studies degree in ministry from the New York Theological Seminary this June. "You take away one of the most important things that humanize us, education—and, by the way, slaves were kept ignorant, not allowed to learn to read and write," Shaird said. "Taking away education perpetuates the slave status. When you do that, you're like Dr. Frankenstein—creating your own monster and then blaming all the problems of society on the monster you've created." When



STEVEN LACK

Shaird gets out, he has a job waiting for him at the Community Justice Center, Inc., in Harlem, a nonprofit research and advocacy organization run by former prisoners. He'll lead seminars at prisons and community centers, trying to help young blacks and Hispanics understand and transcend the forces that push them toward crime.

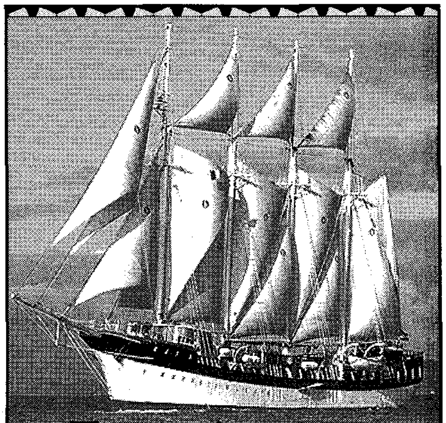
The termination of aid to inmates for higher education is just the latest expression of our society's ambivalence about what prisons are for. We lock people up to keep them away from us, to humiliate, degrade, and condemn them, and to deprive them of dignity, privacy, and autonomy. And we lock them up so they will come out changed for the better, ready to live and work in our communities. These conflicting goals have been at war throughout the history of the American penitentiary.

Before independence, Americans generally flogged, branded, or mutilated those felons they did not hang. Except for debtors and such minor miscreants as vagrants and drunkards, people were held behind bars only to await trial or punishment, and not *as* punishment. The great exception was the Quaker Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, where, as early as 1682, William Penn's Colonial government tried using incarceration as a humane alternative to corporal and capital punishment. In 1764, the utilitarian theory behind the Quakers' practice was expounded by the Marchese Cesare di Beccaria, an Italian criminologist and economist, in his seminal book "On Crimes and Punishments": "The purpose of punishment is not to torment a sensible being, nor to undo a crime already committed. . . . The end of punishment, therefore, is no other than to prevent the criminal from doing further injury to society and to prevent others from committing the like offense." To these goals, today called incapacitation and general deterrence, the Quakers added another: reformation, which they hoped could be achieved if penitent reflection was abetted by Bible study. In the early nineteenth century, Quakers established penitentiaries in accordance with what became known as the Pennsylvania system: a separate cell and exercise yard for each prisoner, so that each existed in complete solitude for the full term of his sentence, save for occasional visits from the superintendent, jailers, and chaplains.

In New York State, detainees awaiting trial and convicts already sentenced—men, women, and children—were all housed together in the state's first penitentiary: Newgate, in Greenwich Village. Overcrowding there led to the construction of a new prison, upstate at Auburn, in 1817, and Elam Lynds, a warden there, instituted a new regime: isolation in single cells at night, followed by congregate work in total silence during the day. The Auburn system, as it came to be known, concentrated on punishment rather than reformation. As Blake McKelvey has recounted in his 1977 book, "American Prisons: A History of Good Intentions," by 1825 Auburn, too, had become overcrowded, and Lynds picked a hundred prisoners and steamed down the Hudson to construct a new prison in the village of Sing Sing. The convict-laborers levelled the base of a precipitous bluff and quarried stone to construct a four-hundred-and-seventy-six-foot-long building that contained eight hundred cells, each three feet three inches wide and equipped with two buckets, one for food and one for human waste.

In May of 1831, Alexis de Tocqueville and Gustave de Beaumont arrived in the United States to report on the American penitentiary systems and their possible applications in France. Beaumont, who did most of the writing—his co-author got sidetracked on another project—concluded that "as long as that prison has not yet been found whose discipline is completely regenerating in its effects, perhaps we may be permitted to say that the best prison is that which does not corrupt." Comparing the Pennsylvania and the Auburn systems, Beaumont and Tocqueville came down on the side of Auburn, since its congregate labor enforced obedience to "habits of society," which the Pennsylvania system's isolation could not. Beaumont and Tocqueville's concern—how to prevent what came to be called prisonization, or convicts' reinforcing one another's anti-social attitudes—continues to shape the debate over correctional policy.

The Auburn system soon achieved dominance in the United States, but not because of any superiority from the standpoint of deterrence or rehabilitation. The decisive factor was economic: contractors would pay wardens more for leasing the efficient labor of prisoners working together in prison quarries or factories than



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for the handiwork of Pennsylvania-system convicts toiling alone. The idea of putting workers in harness without the bother and expense of paying a living wage proved so popular among businessmen that in 1834 organizations of mechanics (as artisans and tradesmen were called) in New York State were moved to gather two hundred thousand signatures on petitions demanding that the Legislature ban the contracting of prison labor. While they were at it, the mechanics attacked the whole idea of reformation, saying that it would lead released inmates to think that they were just as good as people who had never been in prison. The mechanics were rebuffed by a Legislature reluctant to see revenue-producing prisons turned into tax burdens. In 1896, however, the protests of organized labor and of businesses in competition with prison industries finally prevailed, and New York passed a law abolishing the contract system and limiting prison labor to the production of items for use by the state. (That restriction, which was widely emulated throughout the nation, may soon disappear. Phil Gramm, the Texas senator and Presidential candidate, recently called for legalizing the sale of prison-made goods on the commercial market to help defray the cost of prisoners' incarceration.) With much less work to be done, prison administrators' primary concern became how to avoid incendiary idleness among the inmates. Along with prison farms, road gangs, and sports leagues, education came to be viewed as a constructive way to keep prisoners busy.

SOME prisons had long offered instruction of a limited kind, but there was almost none at Sing Sing, where Warden Lynds believed that education would make convicts cleverer and therefore more dangerous. Indeed, it was Lynds' brutal repressiveness that, in 1844, spurred some New York aristocrats to form the Prison Association of New York, whose purpose was to lead a movement to convert prisons into "reformatories," in accordance with an ever-controversial principle enunciated by its first secretary, the Unitarian leader William H. Channing: "The community is itself, by its neglect and bad usages, in part responsible for the sins of its children; and owes the criminal, therefore, aid to reform." Education quickly proved a most effective means of turning prisoners from crime, and was just as quickly denounced as a form of coddling. At New York's Elmira Reformatory, which opened in 1877, young first-time felons could earn early release by behaving well and by applying themselves to studies that included the natural sciences, ethics, and psychology. Less cerebral inmates were steered into industrial-arts classes. All were assembled frequently to hear prominent guest lecturers. The regimen achieved a considerable measure of success: after the reformatory's first decade, fewer than twenty-five per cent of those paroled had returned to crime. But the politics of a century ago, like today's, called for sending more people to prison to serve longer sentences; in 1885, New York's Republican legislators passed a "three strikes and you're out" law. Critics of Elmira-style reformatories called them "hotel prisons" and denounced taxing honest workers to educate the dishonest. Elmira's inmate population was more than doubled, rendering continued intensive education impossible.

No other reformatory achieved Elmira's prominence, but prison education on some scale carried on, at least in the Northern states. In 1972, Senator Claiborne Pell, a Rhode Island Democrat, sponsored a bill to provide federal grants for college tuition to low-income students. The resulting Pell Grant program benefitted an unanticipated group of scholars: prison inmates. By 1976, there were two hundred and thirty-seven higher-education programs in prisons, and by 1982 three hundred and fifty. By 1994, one could earn a bachelor's degree while doing time in the federal prison system or in any of thirty-one state systems. And, interestingly enough, recent studies seem to confirm what Elmira's reformers discovered a century ago: inmates who complete education courses are less likely to return to prison than those who don't. These findings challenge the conventional wisdom among penologists over the past two decades, which was that no program could do much to reduce recidivism, but they are supported by common sense: education leads to employment, which provides a legal way to get money. A study released in 1991 by the New York State Department of Correctional Services, for example, found that male inmates who completed one or more years of higher education in prison had a recidivism rate, four years after their release, more than twenty per cent lower than the average for all male inmates. The Office of Research and Evaluation at the Federal Bureau of Prisons last year reported a similar drop in recidivism among prisoners released in 1987 who had completed one or more education courses at any level during each six-month period they were in prison. In the field of corrections, achieving differentials in recidivism of this magnitude is a cause for celebration.

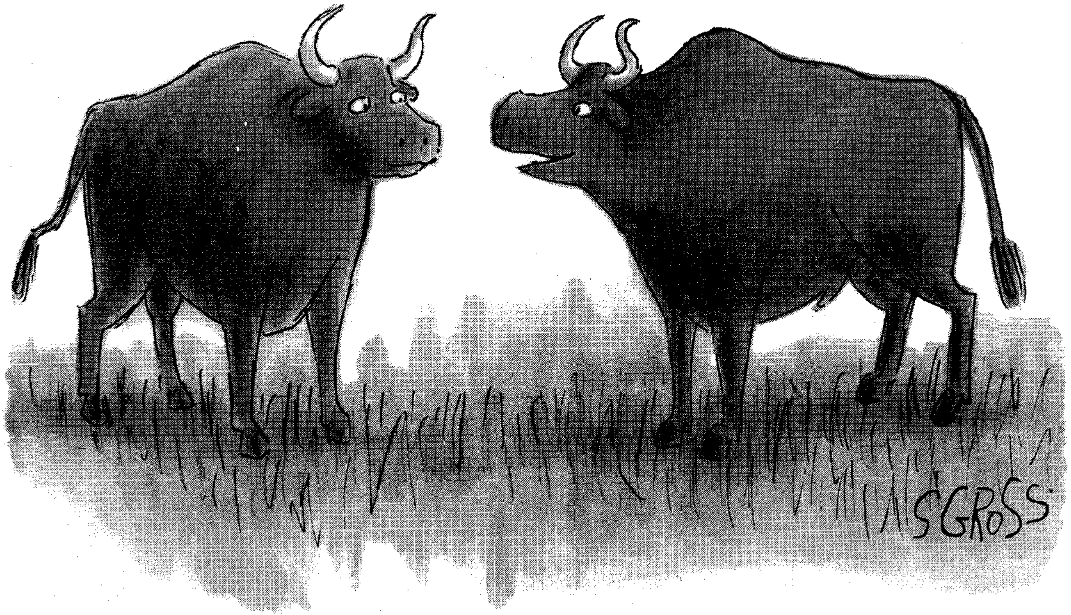
OF the Sing Sing complex's twenty-three hundred prisoners, about two hundred and twenty were enrolled in higher-education courses during the academic year just ended, including those offered by Mercy and the New York Theological Seminary and a paralegal-studies program run by Bronx Community College. The inmate undergraduates spent three hours a day, five days a week, in classes of fifteen or so. The classrooms looked just like those in any public school except for the heavy metal mesh that covers the steel-sashed windows of Sing Sing's school building. The atmosphere was both relaxed and serious, the discussions collegial, but the undergraduates I observed chose to sit grouped roughly by race, for security's sake. They assiduously took down the college professors' words in flat-bound notebooks; spiral notebooks were forbidden because of the wire's potential use as a weapon. A small prison library that is long on Westerns and short on research material was available to them, and they could request copies of anything in their college's campus library. Their teachers found them to be more motivated than the general run of students on the outside; they were thrilled to be treated as intelligent human beings rather than as hazardous waste, and to be learning.

Derrick Cain, who lived in Bedford-Stuyvesant before he was locked up six years ago, and who is doing time for possession of stolen goods (Rolex watches and diamonds, he says), attributes his crimes largely to impulsiveness. "When you get down to the thick of things, we find that what we're all trying to embrace is money," Cain, a handsome man of twenty-eight with a meticulously shaved head, explains. "Myself, I was stretching out to embrace instant gratification. Prison didn't deter me. Prison was an illusion, but the material things were a reality." Cain, who is now eighteen credits short of a bachelor's degree in behavioral science (the only major that Mercy offered at Sing Sing), is positive that college has changed all that for him. "Education enables you to think more objectively, to make conscious decisions," he says. "College requires discipline. Discipline requires patience. I've learned patience in here." (He'd attended a bit of junior college on the outside, but never made a go of it.) He expects he'll need that patience when he gets out and tries to find a job, but the way he pictures it he'll persevere. Citing his own transformation, Cain, not surprisingly, believes that cutting education is a fool's bargain for the state. "First, let's change the name from 'correctional institution' back to 'prison,' and change the name of the Department of Corrections to the Department of Warehousing," he says. "Then understand that if you provide no device or medium for change you can't expect a prisoner to change for the better. With horrible conditions and a lack of education, you'll get counterproductive change. You can only get out of life what you put in."

Cain argues from utilitarianism: education makes prisoners better, safer members of society when they get out, in effect reducing crime. But what of justice? Does a murderer, to take the extreme example, *deserve* to be put through college? George Webber thinks so. Webber is the president emeritus of the New York Theological Seminary and still teaches, in the seminary's master-of-professional-studies-in-ministry program at Sing Sing. Webber is at Sing Sing on Tuesdays, and stays into the evenings, when the program sponsors visiting speakers and films. His students spend ten to twelve hours per week in field education—working as assistant counsellors in drug-treatment programs, organizing Bible-study groups, and providing companionship for inmates isolated in the prison's AIDS ward. The recidivism rate among a total of a hundred and seventy-five graduates of the seminary's ten-month degree program, which has been offered since 1983, has been only about eight per cent, and Webber says that about ten of his graduates are now practicing ministers. The seminary awarded fifteen inmates master of professional studies degrees in ministry on June 7th. The aspirations of one new graduate, Ernesto Ramirez, who wants to become a pastoral counsellor, typify the hopes of his classmates: "As a wounded healer, I would be most effective in seeing other people's pain, sorrow, suffering. I would be able to focus on their needs because I know my needs." The program is entirely underwritten by donations and will continue until the pool of prison-educated college graduates in New York State's facilities dries up.

Webber graduated from Harvard in 1942 with a degree in history; he has been at the seminary since 1969 and established the prison program. He finds in the Bible "a radical, countercultural Jesus who teaches us to expose the injustices of society and deal with society's victims." By Webber's lights, those victims include violent criminals. "The guys take responsibility for what they did," he explains. "But they can say, 'Look, I messed up, I've done awful things, I've committed murder, I deserve punishment, yet at the same time I was victimized by a vicious, corrupt, awful society that never gave me a chance.' Rarely do I have anybody who wasn't treated like shit since he was a baby." Of the Sing Sing residents he declares, "They're human beings, not criminals," although, whatever else they may be, they are certainly criminals. "Take Don Mason," he says of one of his graduates. "In a fit of rage, he kills his wife. He's not a murderer, damn it all! He committed a murder." This distinction is perhaps not as specious as it initially appears. I have run, but I am not a runner; to be a runner is to run regularly, habitually. So, according to Webber, to be a murderer one would have to make a practice of murder. "I don't believe in the unredeemable act," Webber insists. "People can change, and we ought to accept that change as a gift from God. The idea of punishing the victims—the whole thing is terrifying."

To this day, the most critical decisions about correctional policy are often based on considerations that have little rational relationship to the reduction of crime. When Bart Gordon, a Democratic representative from Tennessee, sponsored the 1994 crime-bill amendment that barred prisoners from receiving Pell Grants, his aim was to trim the fat in federal education spending. He was under the impression that prisoners were using up something like seventy million dollars a year in Pell Grants that could have gone to more deserving students—those on the outside. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison, of Texas, a Republican who led the fight in the Senate against Pell Grants for prisoners, argued that inmates siphoned off two hundred million dollars and displaced a hundred thousand law-abiding students. In fact, all applicants who meet the grants' need-based eligibility requirements receive Pell Grants, regardless of how many qualifying applicants there are. As a Gen-



"This year the run in Pamplona is for a good cause—anthrax."

eral Accounting Office report explains, "If incarcerated students received no Pell Grants, no student currently denied a Pell award would have received one and no award amount would have been increased." And the amount of money saved by cutting off grants to prisoners is tiny: according to the General Accounting Office, of approximately four million Pell Grant recipients in the 1993-94 academic year, twenty-three thousand were in prison, and they received thirty-five million dollars of the six billion dollars awarded, or about six cents of every ten program dollars.

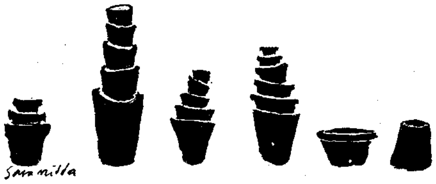
Most inmate students whom I spoke to believe that politicians are well aware that cutting prisoner education programs will result in higher recidivism rates and contribute to a need for more prisons. They believe that right-wing politicians consider additional prison construction not a necessary evil but a necessary good.

Leslie Rodgers, a tall, broad-shouldered thirty-seven-year-old white man from Bay Ridge, was sentenced in 1985 to ten to twenty years for kidnapping; he and a friend had taken a businessman hostage in an attempt to extort money for drugs. Rodgers could read and write only with difficulty when he entered prison, where he discovered that he suffered from dyslexia. In prison, he has earned his high-school equivalency diploma, a bachelor's, and two master's degrees, in sociology and ministry. The parole board rejected him for parole last year, citing the seriousness of his offense. Boards generally give scant weight to the prisoners' efforts at rehabilitation; they simply look at the original offense, and if it rubs them the wrong way they deny parole.

Rodgers does not impute cynicism to those politicians who declare war on crime and then attack programs that help prisoners go straight. "Maybe they believe that there's some kind of moral imperative underlying their agenda, some ultimate good behind it," he suggests. "Look at welfare reform. The rhetoric is 'Take people off welfare and they can work.' The reality is there are no jobs. The politicians know that, but that doesn't mean they don't believe in what they do. There are all kinds of contradictions and unintended consequences that aren't necessarily thought out." He does believe, however, that there are constituencies that benefit when more and more people are imprisoned. "There's a whole lot of industry that's built around the prisons—constructing them, guarding them, supplying them. But that doesn't mean that the politicians say, 'Let's create crime.' These are unconscious processes. It's more like 'Hey, there's a whole lot of crime—why don't we put a prison in this impoverished upstate community?' The prisons have become a stimulus for economic activity in a service-oriented society. They take people from the urban underclass, problematic people, and do something with them that benefits poor working-class white people from counties upstate. But someday the prison system has to collapse, because it's really not profitable. It's a corporate entitlement program."

The facts behind Rodgers' argument are apparent—according to a 1992 study by Daniel Feldman, the chairman of the Assembly Committee on Correction, about ninety per cent of New York's corrections budget is spent in upstate districts, whose Republican representatives clamor for more and more incarceration—but Rodgers could not have explained any of it a few years ago. "I was pretty ignorant," he says. "I didn't have the worst life, but I grew up without a father. For years, my living-room furniture was beach chairs, and my mother for a number of months put me in an orphanage, because she didn't want to lose me. I know what it's like to do badly in life. But without education I had an inability to articulate that experience. And when you can't articulate your experience, No. 1, you lack the concepts or words to understand your situation, and, No. 2, you're in a position where you have limited means to broaden the range of your social existence. One consequence of that is frustration, powerlessness. This is not an excuse for crime, nor is it the single cause of crime, but it certainly is a factor."

Many of the convicts say that the inability to describe and understand their circumstances imprisoned them before they were ever locked up. And acquiring an education liberated them before they were released. None of the convicts felt that, upon reflection, ignorance had been bliss. Kerry Wallis was sent to Sing Sing in 1987 at the age of thirty, for six armed robberies; he would put a knife to the throats of cabdrivers to get money for cocaine. Four years later, he left prison as Mercy College valedictorian. (He attributes his relatively short prison sentence to the fact that he's white.) Now Wallis runs drug-intervention programs for kids in trouble in Brooklyn and is an adjunct professor of psychology at Mercy College. He has a master's in counselling and development from Long Island University. "College courses made me aware of the rottenness of my behavior," he says. "In developmental psychology, I learned I was overloading on pleasure and not focussing on reason. I was impulsive. I came to understand, 'Oh, that's why I was such an asshole.' I had to make a change. Would I have made it without Mercy College? Who knows? But you need awareness before you're motivated to change. You need an idea." Wallis's success is not unparalleled among released inmates with degrees: one former inmate is the corps commanding officer of the Salvation Army in Brownsville, several are lawyers, and many are drug counsellors and youth workers in the communities from which they came.



THE education of prisoners has, in a sense, given the corrections system its first true consciousness of itself, and no one has contributed more to that consciousness than Eddie Ellis. A gentle-looking, bespectacled man of fifty-four, Ellis, who is now the president of the Community Justice Center, Inc., went to prison for murder in 1969 and regained his freedom a year ago. He maintains that he was innocent. When he was charged, he was the director of community relations for the New York City branch of the Black Panthers, and in the late sixties the Panthers were subjected to a massive campaign of harassment and frameups by the F.B.I. "During my entire time in prison, I was absolutely convinced I was going home in two or three weeks," Ellis recalls. "I always had litigation pending." As it turned out, he had plenty of time to earn a bachelor's degree in business administration from Marist College while at Green Haven Correctional Facility, in Stormville, New York, and a master's in ministry at Sing Sing, to which he was transferred in August of 1987.

At Green Haven, Ellis and his fellow-students carried out a research project that revealed that seventy-five per cent of all New York State prisoners—who now number more than sixty-eight thousand—came from seven communities in New York City. Those inner-city neighborhoods were characterized by abject poverty, disintegrated families, unemployment of at least sixty per cent among black males between eighteen and thirty-five, a more than fifty-per-cent high-school-dropout rate among males, and high incidences of AIDS, tuberculosis, and low-birthweight babies. "The trouble with moral condemnation as a corrections policy," Ellis says of the current "lock 'em up" approach to criminal justice, "aside from its shaky moral premise—that criminals started out on a level playing field and simply chose not to take advantage of legitimate opportunities—is that the pure-punishment model will create horrendous people who come out worse than when they went in. The purpose of prison should be to release people as less of a threat than when they went in." However, Ellis doesn't think that prison should be easy on prisoners; he says that sentences should be indeterminate and that no one should be released from prison until he has proved that he has been rehabilitated.

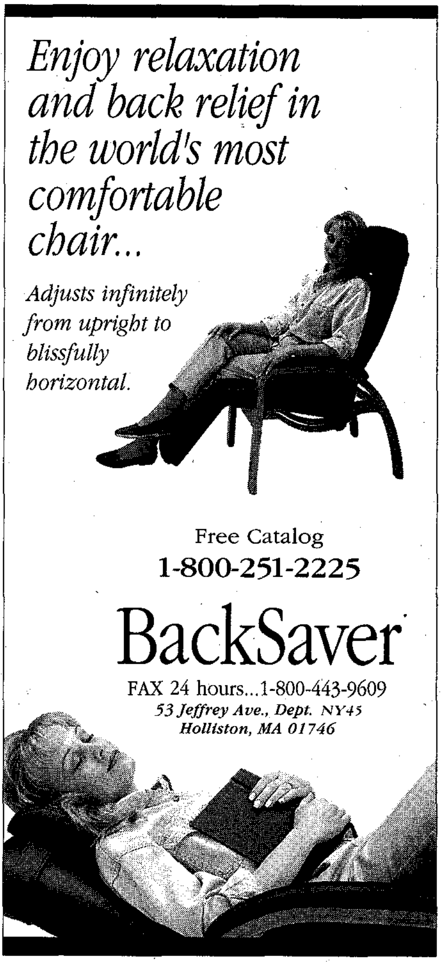
Ellis and his colleagues at Green Haven also did an analysis of the New York State prison population in the years between 1940 and 1990. According to their findings, most of the prisoners in 1940 were Irish, Italian, German, and Jewish, and up until the nineteen-sixties, they found, the rate of recidivism was relatively low. The reason, Ellis explains, was that the white prisoners would get vocational training and be welcomed into union positions when they got out of prison. But as the prison population became increasingly composed of minorities the job market for released convicts shrank. Since former prisoners weren't getting jobs, Ellis says, the notion of rehabilitation got discredited. Now, he says, "we decide we need (a) more police, (b) more prisons, (c) longer sentences and less parole. Governor Pataki can explain his whole criminal-justice program in fifteen seconds, and even a moron can understand it."

A NUMBER of administrators in New York's Department of Correctional Services have made it clear to me that they fear retribution from their superiors if they speak out in favor of programs that the new Governor wants to cut. The Governor has ended state funding for inmate higher education, and at one point declared that he intended to eliminate prisoner education beyond the eighth grade (twenty-five per cent of New York's prisoners read below the fifth-grade level when they arrive in prison), though he later backed away from that plan. One source told me, however, that most prison administrators support higher-education programs, because they help maintain security by keeping the inmates busy, while costing the prison system—if not the taxpayer—nothing. "It's going to be much more difficult to run prisons day to day," this official said. "People in prison spend years forging hope—they'll go to the law library for ten years. The college program was one of the big symbols of hope that someday you could get out of this criminal-justice system. And hope keeps people alive. A prison becomes dangerous when it becomes what old-timers used to call 'deathstruck'—when people in the prison feel it doesn't make any difference whether they're dead or alive."

The official believes that cutting education is just the beginning. "It's becoming quite a trend—no programs. What happened at the federal prison in Marion, Ohio, after two corrections officers were killed twelve years ago—they locked people in their cells twenty-three hours a day. What was originally seen as a problem is now seen as a solution. States are building whole prisons where the routine is 'lock 'em down'—twenty-three hours a day. It's a gruesome road." The reason that the public hates prison-education programs, the official said, is not that they don't work but that they do. He knows three men who completed high school and college in prison, went to law school when they got out, and are now lawyers. "These stories are what make us angry," he says. "We resent people coming alive. We think that people don't deserve to find life, especially when they've been marked as symbolizing the new demonic presence."

Indeed, several recent proposals make it clear that retribution is currently our principal goal, whatever it costs us. Alabama has reinstituted chain gangs. In New Jersey, the People's Prison Act would eliminate most recreational and all educational activities for some violent offenders. And in the United States Senate the Stop Turning Out Prisoners Act (STOP), introduced by Kay Bailey Hutchison and Phil Gramm, would void all federal-court consent decrees redressing inhumane conditions in prison.

Elam Lynds would approve. ♦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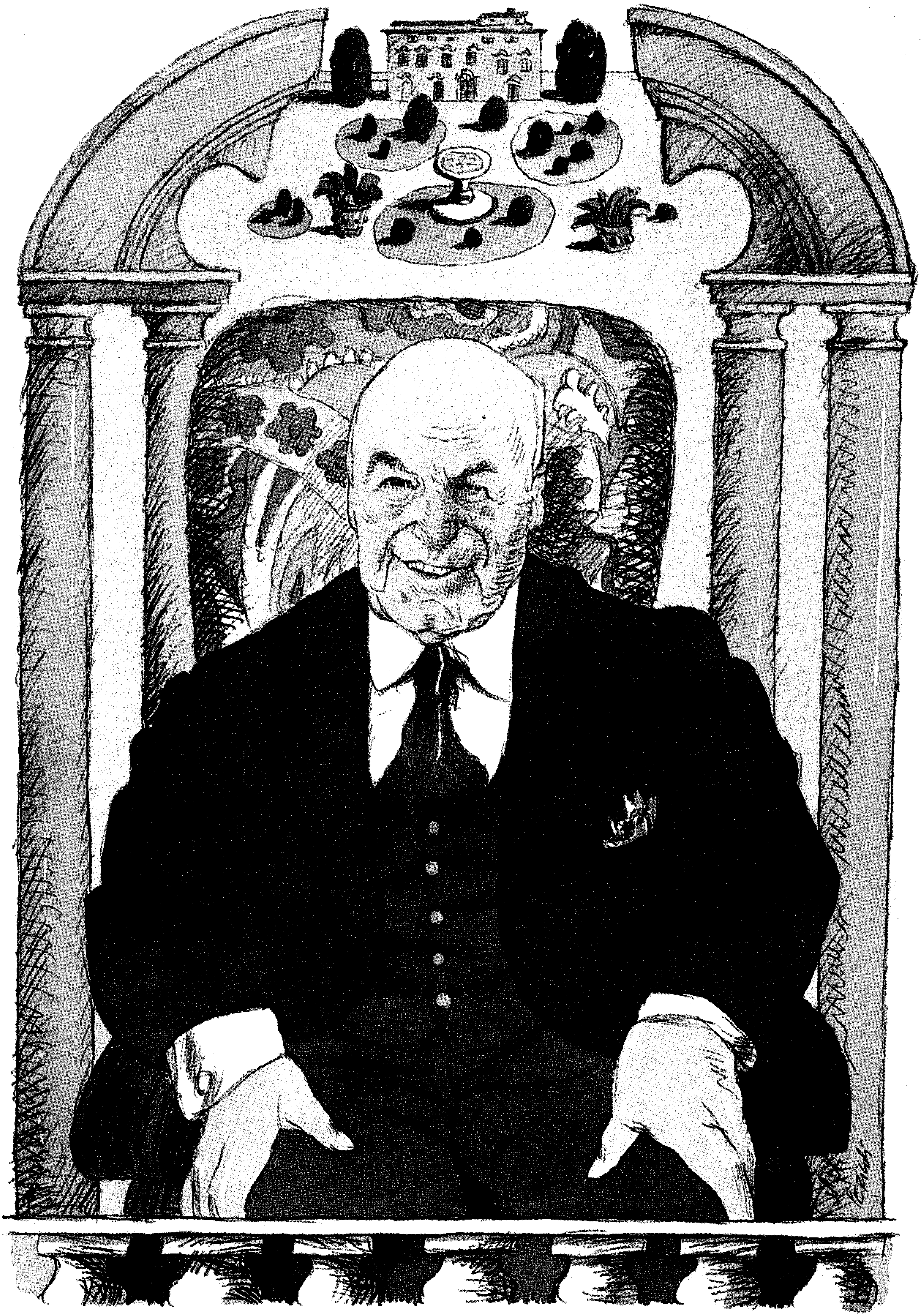
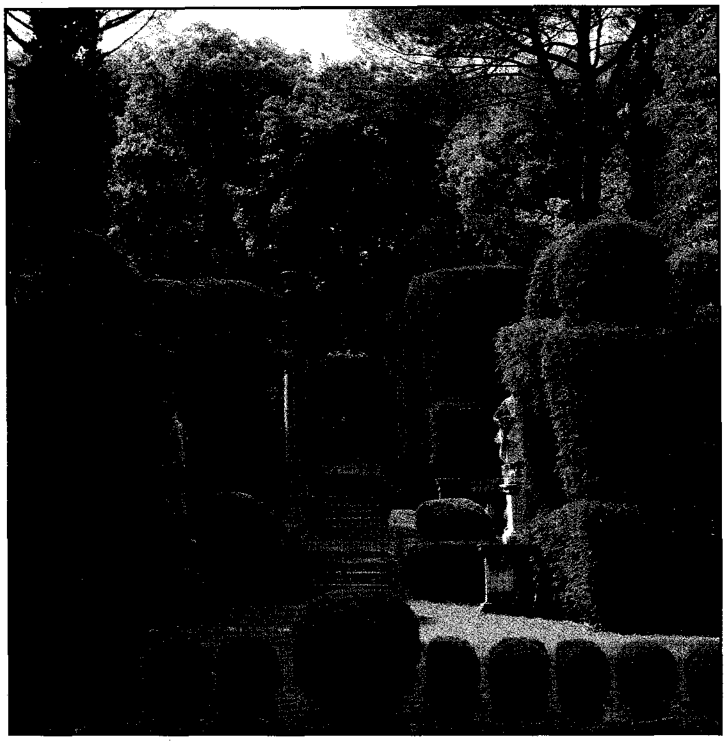
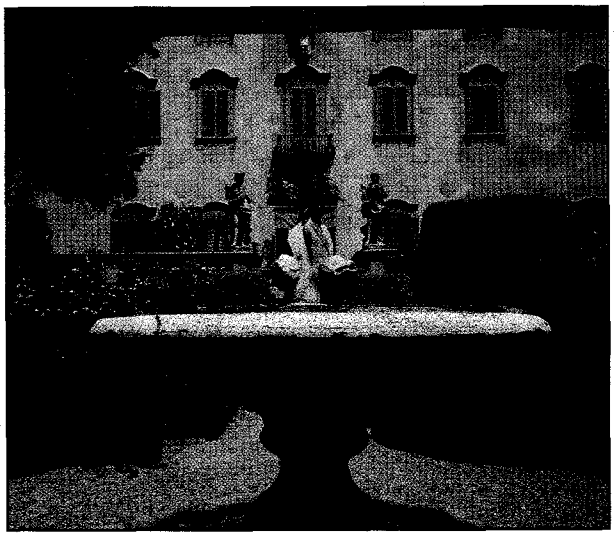


TULLIO PERICOLO

Sir Harold Acton; and, opposite, formal gardens and a fountain at La Pietra, which he left in trust to New York University.





GARDEN, LEFT: DERRY MOORE; FOUNTAIN: SAPIEHA/ART RESOURCE, N.Y.

LIFE AND LETTERS

A LAST FANTASY IN FLORENCE

The late Sir Harold Acton wanted to create a great work of fiction—and he did it in the world he cultivated at La Pietra, the Florentine Renaissance villa where he held court as the last of the expatriate British aesthetes.

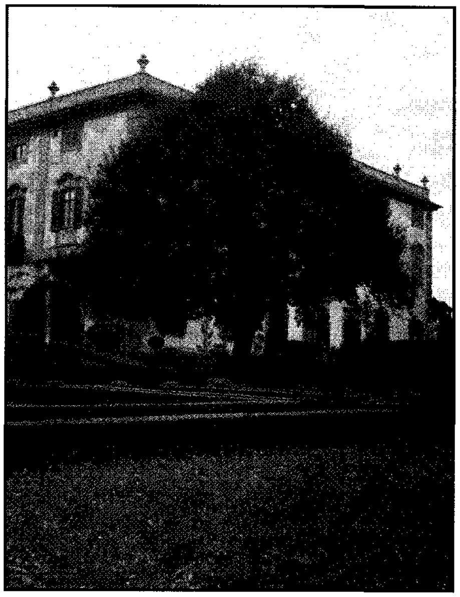
BY DAVID PLANTE

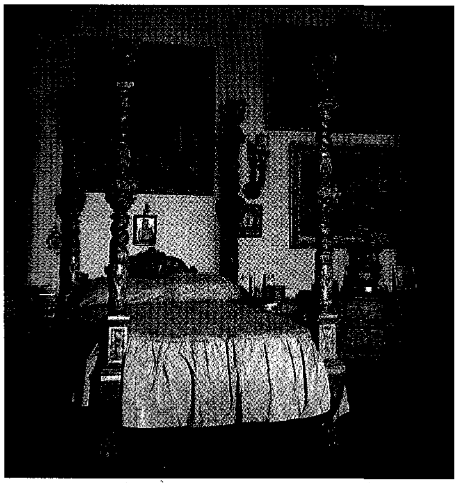
HAROLD ACTON, an Englishman known as the last great aesthete, lived nearly all his life in a grand villa called La Pietra, on a hilltop with a view of the city of Florence through cypress trees. He died in February, 1994, at the age of eighty-nine, and six months later I went to have a look around La Pietra, where I had been invited by Alexander Zielcke, a painter and photographer who had been Acton's companion for some twenty-five years.

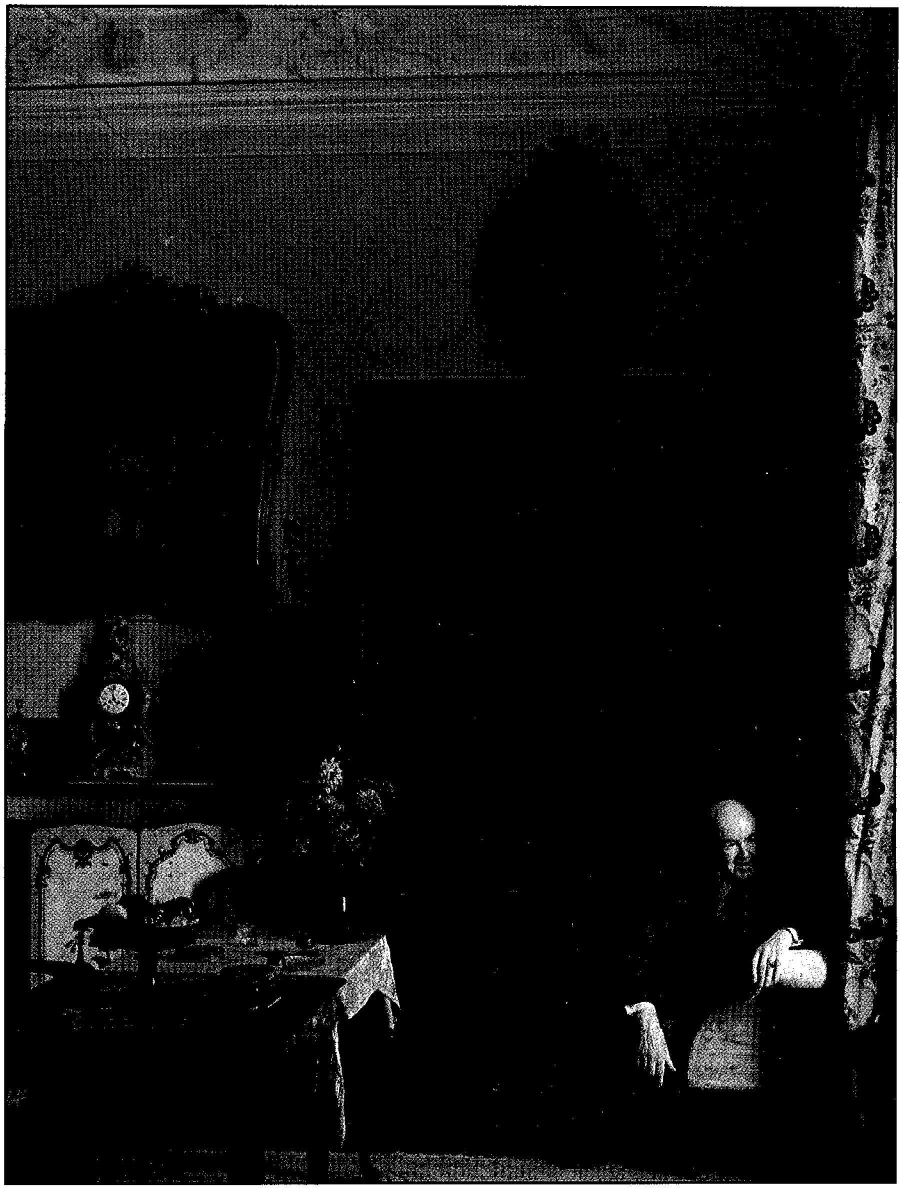
It was raining. I took a taxi out from Florence. Inside the gates of the grounds, the taxi passed an olive grove with high, uncut grass, and then, beyond the grove, a statue on a pedestal appeared, its forearm broken off, a rusted iron rod sticking out from an elbow. The taxi circled a great stone tub surrounded by clipped hedges and stopped at large, nail-studded double doors, which were shut. A woman in a pink-and-white striped smock was standing at a smaller door to the left. She said that she was the cook, Vanna, and that all the other servants had gone. She apologized that she couldn't show me in through the main entrance but must ask me to come in through this side entrance. It led into the chapel of the villa, which was gray and white, with tall candlesticks and two champagne bottles on the altar. In the holy-water font just to one side of the entrance were some rags, and the chapel looked dusty. When I asked if it had ever been used, Vanna said no, no, as if it had never occurred to her that it could have been used. It led into an anteroom with a telephone, and from there I went into the main entrance hall of the villa.

The rotunda, where Acton had lain in state for three days, was built into a central courtyard dating from the fifteenth century, and had a fountain in the middle—a huge stone goblet filled with goldfish. A circular flight of stairs, with tapestries hanging on the curved walls, led up to the next floor. Vanna took me into the drawing room—*il soggiorno*—to show me where *il barone* always sat, in a red wing chair set among other armchairs and a red sofa. The upholstery of the chairs and sofa looked stained and worn.

From there we went into a vaulted library, with medieval wooden polychrome statues of saints on top of the Renaissance shelves. In one corner was a large Buddha. And from the library we went into the study, which was also vaulted and had Renaissance bookshelves but was as narrow as a passageway. The shelves were sagging under sets of books such as "The World's Best Literature," the Encyclopædia Britan-







nica, "La Stirpe de'Medici di Cafaggiolo." Acton's desk was a big table, and on it were piles of papers that looked as if they had been there for years, untouched. In the midst of the papers was a framed black-and-white photograph of a thin, elegant woman, which appeared to have been taken in the thirties.

I said to Vanna that that must be Acton's mother. Vanna said yes, a beautiful woman. Also on the desk was a silver penholder, which held, along with old pens and pencils and stamps and paper clips, some chestnuts. Touching them, Vanna said that *il barone* thought they brought luck.

He was a Catholic, wasn't he? I asked.

Oh yes, Vanna said, *il barone* was religious. He kept silver medals and crosses in the breast pocket of his jacket. No, he didn't go to church, but he believed. Tears rose in Vanna's eyes. *Il barone* was a very special person, she said; he was a unique gentleman, who, even when he was in carpet slippers, wore a suit with a vest.

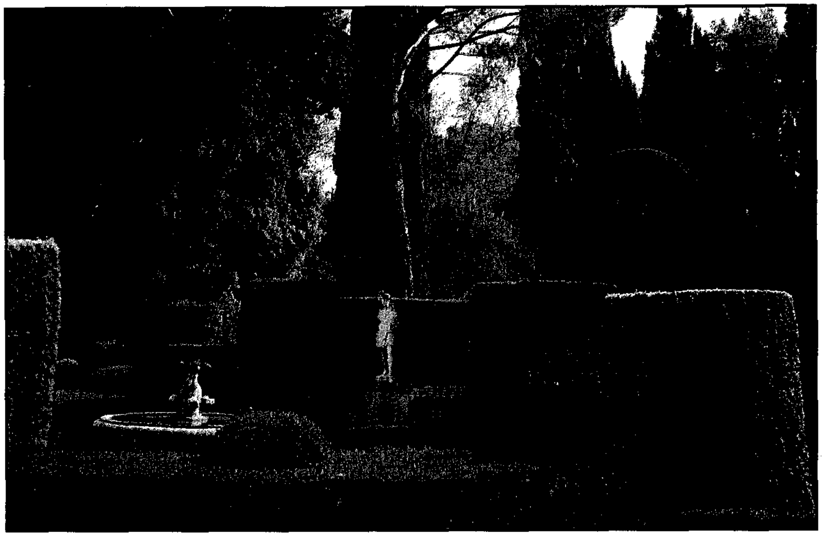
Acton had willed La Pietra to New York University, in the same way that Bernard Berenson had willed his villa, I Tatti, to Harvard as a center for study. Acton had stipulated that everything remain as he left it. I asked Vanna if she would stay on when the university took over. Wiping her tears away, she said that she didn't know, but that she was very attached to the villa: "*Sono molto attaccata alla villa.*"

At the rear of the study were closed double doors, and Vanna opened them into what she thought was a waiting room. At first, the room, Venetian-like, with delicately painted walls and sconces, gilded armchairs upholstered in yellow silk, and a birdcage on a scagliola-topped table, appeared grand, but the more I looked the more I saw flaking, nicks, faded patches, a fine grayness over everything—and I thought no one had sat in any of the chairs for ninety years, not since Acton's father, Arthur Acton, bought the fifteenth-century villa and had it redone.

Vanna asked if I wanted something to drink, and I followed her down a passage into a large, vaulted anteroom to the kitchen, which contained glass-fronted cupboards filled with piles of plates and wineglasses, and silver salvers and silver platters with covers. On the walls over the cupboards were pockmarked frescoes of landscapes in trompe l'œil. The kitchen itself was stark, with two large worktables in the middle, a

EXTERIOR OF HOUSE © CECIL BEATON, COURTESY OF SOTHEBY'S, LONDON;
INTERIORS DERRY MOORE

A view with rooms, opposite page: the villa photographed by Cecil Beaton; Sir Harold in his bedroom; his gilt rococo bed. The Royals were his most coveted guests—Princess Margaret was the first, but she annoyed him by listening to dance music all night. This page, below: the cypress alley and the garden. Left: a garden party photographed by Beaton. Sir Harold held perhaps the best salon of his time, almost as if all the grand European hostesses ended in him.



GARDENS, DERRY MOORE.

stainless-steel sink, and a gas stove, which Vanna said was getting too old to cook on and was no longer good for the soufflés *il barone* had liked so much. She told me how every Monday *il barone* would go through the week's guest list with her, arranging menus according to who was coming. The Prince and Princess of Wales, when they'd stayed, had eaten her food, though they ate little. She waited a moment and then breathlessly told me that she had seen *il barone*—he had appeared to her. Looking around to make sure we were alone, she said people would think her mad for saying this. "*Io sono molto sensibile*," she said—she sensed presences.

From another part of the villa, someone called, "Vanna, Vanna," and I followed her as she ran anxiously to the room with the telephone, where Alexander Zielcke, a large, pale, middle-aged German with longish gray hair combed smoothly back, was waiting. In a slightly false voice, Vanna told him that she had been telling me how she and *il barone* used to discuss the week's menu.

Zielcke, impatient with her, said no, *il barone* was never so concerned about the week's menu.

He was, Vanna insisted.

"No, no," Zielcke said, and, asking Vanna to bring coffee up to the office, he left.

Alone, I wandered down a long corridor and into several dark, shuttered bedrooms, with the bedclothes heaped up on the beds; and bathrooms with enormous tubs behind screens, and chaise longues. The master bedroom, called *la camera della baronessa*, which had been Acton's mother's bedroom and had been used by the British Royals, had a large Renaissance bed with gilded columns at its corners and a red silk counterpane. Over the grand fireplace hung the most valuable painting in the villa, a Madonna and Child with St. John the Baptist by Giorgio Vasari, still in its original frame. The gilt on the slightly tilting columns at the corners of the bed was worn, and the counterpane looked as if it hadn't been cleaned since the Renaissance. Down another corridor, I came across a huge, dim room where eighteenth-century chairs were lined up along the walls. I was in the ballroom. I crossed the herringbone parquet floor and opened double doors onto another room, so dark that all I could see was shapes of furniture, and I didn't search for a light switch.

Before I left, Zielcke emerged from

"The penicillin looks good."

• •

his office and said he would walk around the grounds with me. Sharing an umbrella, we went into a walled-in garden to the side of the villa, where vegetables and flowers for the house were grown. There were many lemon trees in pots, which in winter would go into a *limonaia,* a vast building with a dirt floor along one side of the garden.

As we walked through the formal garden at the back of the villa, Zielcke said he had been having some of the box hedges replanted. He couldn't have done this while Sir Harold, as Zielcke called Acton, was alive. Sir Harold would have been worried by someone's replacing old, dying hedges with new ones. The garden had been designed in 1904 by Sir Harold's father, after a Renaissance garden.

Acton had made Zielcke a part of his life, and they did a book together, "Tuscan Villas," with text by Acton and photographs by Zielcke. Acton gave Zielcke a studio at the top of the villa—where Arthur Acton had once painted—to paint his large abstractions. The writer Antony Lambton, who was a close friend of Acton's, told me that Zielcke was very attentive to Acton in his last, sad years. In his will Acton left Zielcke "my personal jewellery and that of my Mother."

When I asked Zielcke if he would like to say anything about Acton, he answered no, he wanted me to remember Acton for myself. But in the course of our walk he did say that he had organized life at La Pietra for Sir Harold, and had also advised him. When a new president took over at New York University, in 1991, Sir Harold wrote a letter of congratulation to him, and after some time went by without a reply Sir Harold became anxious. Perhaps New York University was no longer interested in his bequest of La Pietra? Zielcke suggested writing another letter, to test the university's interest, and the response was immediate.

I noted as we walked about the garden that the statues were crumbling, and so were the architectural follies. A stone bench in front of some cypress trees was broken in two. Sections of hedge were missing, and some sections were so overgrown that I could see through the dark-green leaves to the gray twisted branches.

Zielcke said, "I will be living nearby. I have a good, friendly relationship with the people at New York University, and will come to consult. But I want to devote myself now to my painting."

As I was waiting for a taxi, a small car came up the drive. A large, unshaven man with a ponytail got out. He was an architect, and said that according to the plans of the villa there should be two small rooms that had not been evident when he looked around the villa but might have been walled in.

Laughing a little, Zielcke said, "Maybe they contain a secret staircase."

I asked what Acton could have been up to with a secret staircase.

Zielcke frowned, and I realized he did not like me to joke about Acton. He said, "Sir Harold would not have known about the hidden rooms, much less have used a secret staircase. But his father! His father was a *donnaiolo,* a real ladies' man. *He* could have had a secret staircase put in to get away from his wife and meet women in the garden."

HAROLD ACTON, who was sometimes confused, ever by Florentines, with Bernar Berenson, was thought of as a character, or even a parody of a character, out of Henry James—a nineteenth-century figure, living on his own isolated hill, from which the high-rise apartment houses of the twentieth century were visible only on distant hills. He became a celebrity, not just as the wealthy foreign owner of a splendid Renaissance villa but as one of the last representatives of an Anglo-Florentine expatriate world that had existed at least from the time Robert and Elizabeth Browning came to live in Florence because it was beautiful and cheap, and because it was a refuge from a disapproving England. According to Claus von Bülow, Acton was a prominent member of the Society of the Dilettanti, with his picture hanging in Brooks's Club. He was knighted in 1974. Though there was some doubt about his father's legitimacy, this was kept secret enough for Harold Acton to claim an impressive ancestry, which could be traced to the Saxons in Shropshire and into the aristocratic high life of all the great European capitals, including Naples, where in the late eighteenth century an Englishman called John Acton entered into the service of the King of Naples as a naval adviser (and probable lover of the Queen). Harold Acton's two autobiographical volumes, "Memoirs of an Aesthete" and "More Memoirs of an Aesthete," show that he lived at the center of a large network of threads: just by tugging any one thread he could bring together the whole tangle of interconnected aristocrats, politicians, and artists of his day. Acton's life as a young man was salon-based, and in the second half of his life he himself held perhaps the best salon of the time, almost as though all the grand European hostesses ended in him.

In the mid-sixties, when I was in my mid-twenties, I was taken by older friends to meet Acton at La Pietra. On entering the drawing room, I saw a bald, broad-shouldered man in a gray three-piece suit, kicking at his barking dogs. When he turned to me, he was elaborately polite and asked if I'd like to see the garden. As we walked along the cypress alleys lined with statues on plinths, he said that the cocks of the statues of male nudes had been knocked off by Allied Forces occupying the villa during the Second World War and kept as souvenirs. Refined as he was, there was a sexual energy to him that was almost crude. He walked with light, forward jerks of his body.

I recall Acton's voice more clearly than what he said—a lilting voice with its own international accent. He had a way of pausing in mid-sentence as if to prepare for a surprise, and his voice rose to a high, thin, almost Chinese-sounding pitch when he revealed the surprise. He gossiped about friends of de Gaulle, about ambassadors, artists, art historians, and antiquarians, and I realized that most of the people he referred to were, like him and me, homosexual.

Over the next twenty-five years or so, whenever I happened to be in Florence I rang Acton. It took him a long time to come to the telephone—the only one in the villa, in the room off the entrance hall—and while you waited you thought you must be disturbing him, but he always sounded very pleased and asked you to come for a modest meal in his modest home. Sometimes there were other guests, mainly English and American, whose names you were not quite sure that Acton himself knew but toward whom he was very polite; sometimes you were alone with him, and then he wanted to hear gossip. He seemed to keep open house. Antony Lambton said that, in a way, Acton hastened his end, because he was so beautifully mannered: he felt it was his duty to show visitors his garden, and this was a terrible burden to him.

In Acton's last years, when he was too ill to be visited, I would call a British friend of his in Florence, Joan Haslip, to find out how he was, and in the winter of 1993 she invited me to have tea with her. Haslip, a biographer of Marie Antoinette and other historical figures, had a house on Bellosguardo, above Florence, on the opposite side of the Arno from Acton, and had lived in Florence off and on since she was eight. As a girl of sixteen, she knew Norman Douglas, the Scottish author of "South Wind"; he had moved to Italy for its boys, and, because Joan Haslip was cheeky, he used to take her out to lunch in simple trattorias in Florence and tell her Italian fairy tales.

"I'm so depressed," she said as she sat on a sofa in her narrow sitting room. She was suffering from arthritis and had asked me to prepare tea for both of us in her kitchen. "My two closest friends in Florence are dying." These were Acton and the art historian John Pope-Hennessy. She said, "Well, I should like to die, too. I don't think I'll ever finish my book on Napoleon's sisters." She held out her cup for more tea. As I poured, I asked her if she had seen Acton recently. She said she hadn't, but she talked to him every day on the telephone. She spoke about him sadly and possessively. "Harold can only remember his years in China before the war now and, further back, Oxford."

"What does he remember of Oxford?" I asked.

"What else but that his years there were the best of his life?"

"Does he see anyone?"

"Only I see him," she said. "Poor Harold, he has no family left, none at all. He used to have what he called his Neapolitan cousins from his father's side and his American cousins from his mother's side, but I doubt he has been in touch with them at all for years. All Harold has, really, is La Pietra itself, and it is only because of La Pietra that any real attention is given him. If he lived in Tooting Beck, even having written his books he wouldn't be known."

There was a tone of lament to Haslip's talk, though she did laugh from time to time, in a short, abrupt way.

"Things will begin to disappear now from La Pietra, you'll see," she said. "Small objects, then larger and larger—the iller Harold becomes. Perhaps they've already begun to disappear. Well, Harold's letters from Evelyn Waugh have disappeared, haven't they? Who would have had the knowledge that they were valuable? I don't know. But they've gone."

On that visit to Florence, I also saw John Pope-Hennessy. When I said that we'd see just how run-down La Pietra was when Acton died and his soul went out of the place, he said, "Do you think Harold has a soul?"

A few months after Acton died, Joan Haslip died, and toward the end of 1994 John Pope-Hennessy died. The three of them found one another difficult: Haslip used to complain that Acton destroyed her parties by getting so drunk he had to be taken away by his chauffeur, and Pope-Hennessy would say that Acton got drunk only when he was bored, and Haslip had the maddening habit of talking throughout Acton's lectures at the British Institute. But they remained close, as the last members of a social set that was now extinct—a set that had gathered at the Caffè Doney in the Via Tornabuoni when it was the fashionable center of Anglo-Florentine life.

THOUGH Acton was born in Florence in 1904, he was British, and he lived the expatriate's Florentine fantasy at its richest. It was a fantasy he inherited, down to the last silver spoon, from his parents. His father, Arthur, was a cultured man, who had studied art in Paris, where he met the American architect Stanford White and began a career as a dealer by filling the houses White designed for Americans on Long Island with furniture and paintings bought in Europe. His reputation as a dealer remained with him all his life. (Bernard Berenson, who also made a lot of money on paintings, was considered an adviser, but Arthur Acton *handled* the goods.) He married Hortense Mitchell, whose father was the founder of the Illinois Trust & Savings Bank; the gossip was that he had earned his fortune from the Chicago stockyards. Her money was what made it possible for Arthur Acton to buy and furnish La Pietra. So their two sons, Harold and William, grew up in a villa with some sixty rooms, a grand staircase, huge tapestries, fountains in the garden, and thirty-five servants. When Harold Acton was a boy, Sergei Diaghilev and Léon Bakst, who were themselves fantasy figures to him, visited La Pietra. Of the older generation, he knew Bernard Berenson, Edith Wharton, Max Beerbohm, Oscar Wilde's old friend Reggie Turner, D. H. Lawrence, Norman Douglas, the Sitwells, and Gertrude Stein, and of his own generation he knew pretty much everyone: his English friends included Evelyn Waugh, Nancy Mitford, Diana Mosley, George Orwell, Cecil Beaton, Cyril Connolly, Henry Green, Anthony Powell, and Graham Greene. He could devote his life, even more than his parents had, to pleasure—to ballet and poetry and rococo art.

One of Acton's ambitions was to be a beacon of manners and ideas for other people, and as a young man he had a gift for frivolous gestures that expressed the spirit of his time. At Eton, he and his close friend Brian Howard hired a room at the back of Dyson's, a jeweller's shop, and there played records of Russian ballet music and danced the parts they had seen Massine and Nijinsky, Karsavina and Tchernicheva dance at performances of the Ballets Russes. At Oxford, according to Martin Green's "Children of the Sun," from which a lot of this information comes, Acton went "tittupping" along the High Street with a gray bowler and a tightly rolled umbrella, wearing (under a long black velvet coat) silver, mauve, or pink trousers so wide at the knees and ankles that they looked like a pleated skirt—a style copied by many fellow-students and finally known to the outside world as Oxford bags. He became notorious for declaiming "The Waste Land" through a megaphone from a window of his Oxford rooms, a scene used by Evelyn Waugh in "Brideshead Revisited." Green writes that the Oxford of the time "*was* fantasy." Acton, in his years there, perfected the role of the aggressive, virile aesthete-dandy, which the poet Stephen Spender recalls was emulated by his contemporaries a generation later. But the role Acton most fancied for himself was that of modernist.

For Acton, to be a modernist was to be, as he called himself, a "hunter" of Philistines. And who were these Philistines? They were the culturally conservative English: people like the so-called Hearties at Oxford, and his own father, who wanted him to become a banker—people who, if they read anything, read the Georgian poets and Kipling. Acton taunted them with his enthusiasm for Picasso and Stravinsky and Cocteau and Pound and Eliot. When he was still at Eton, he and Brian Howard published a single-issue magazine called *The Eton Candle*, with a pink cover, in which the Georgian poets were denounced and Edith Sitwell was extolled as a genius. Acton contributed poems and a chapter of a novel. The magazine was reviewed by the *Times Literary Supplement* and reprinted in London, and Sitwell let everyone know she loved it. Acton then received a letter from an editor at Duckworth's and published his first collection of poems, "Aquarium," which included such lines as "Voluptuously blatant in my greed, I am the woman garbed in heliotrope,/Whose bustle panics peacocks in the park." He also started a magazine at Oxford, called *The Oxford Broom*, with the idea of sweeping the old away for the new. Selina Hastings, in her recent biography of Evelyn Waugh, describes Acton at Oxford as an "arbiter, innovator and iconoclast." In Acton's championing of, say, Gertrude Stein (he helped make her reputation in England when he invited her to lecture at Oxford), he was representative of many of his generation who were inspired by the modernists and were in positions, either socially or as critics, to help them. Though Acton and his set—Brian Howard, Nancy Cunard, Peter Quennell, Alan Pryce-Jones, and Cyril Connolly—were themselves incapable of the modernists' essential originality, they recognized that originality and proclaimed it, and people heard them. Acton's part in spreading the word of modernism must be acclaimed as one of his achievements.

It was also as an anti-philistine that, among his close friends, Acton expressed his homosexuality with humorous frankness. He liked to tell a story of how, in a restaurant in Naples, he shocked compatriots at the next table by describing sex with a Neapolitan boy. He was put off women, he told Lambton, by the *thés dansants* that his parents gave at La Pietra, where, on his visits home from college, he would have to dance with duchesses and contessas, all with stinking hair under their arms. But, as open as he was among people he knew, he wanted his homosexuality concealed from the rest of the world. He never spoke to Selina Hastings after she revealed, in her biography of Nancy Mitford, that he was one of Mitford's close homosexual friends. And his homosexuality is not mentioned in his memoirs, though he writes, without specifying the gender, that he had lots of lovers, most of whom married and became parents: "Do they remember our ecstasies . . . ? I have not forgotten a single kiss."

AFTER Acton came down from Oxford, he lived in London with his brother, William, in a house in Lancaster Gate filled with Venetian furniture and eighteenth-century mirrors that, according to Alan Pryce-Jones, their father intended them to sell. The brothers went to fancy-dress balls and parties, where they met jazz singers and drank American cocktails. William wanted to be a painter, and Harold wanted to be a writer.

But Acton's belief in his ability to be a writer of important fiction was perhaps his biggest fantasy. His first novel, "Humdrum," was reviewed by Cyril Connolly in *The New Statesman* together with Evelyn Waugh's "Decline and Fall," which Waugh had dedicated to Acton. Acton wrote in his "Memoirs of an Aesthete" about Connolly's reaction to his novel (and he forever after called Connolly "that horrible, grubby, little man"), "After a panegyric of 'Decline and Fall,' he proceeded steadily to demolish my novel until there was nothing left of it: I knew as much about English people and customs, it appeared, as a Chinese who had derived his information from the back numbers of *Punch*."

Acton had helped Waugh socially. Selina Hastings writes that Acton introduced Waugh not only to the work of the modernists but to all the people Waugh was not in a social position to meet—people who became characters in his novels. Now Acton, who had been a celebrity at Oxford, found himself a failure, and Waugh, who had been a minor figure at Oxford, was a celebrity.

"For God's sake, Ms. Williams, can't you see it's some kind of takeover? Call my attorneys!"

Acton tried history. He chose as his first subject the decline of the Medici family—"a tribute," he wrote in his memoirs, "to my native Tuscany." Influenced, no doubt, by the Sitwells, he also wrote in his memoirs, "I wished my style to be as elaborate as that of the seventeenth century I was writing about." There is, in fact, a great liveliness at the center of his history, "The Last Medici," in part because of the research Acton did for it, but even more because of something personal—something to do with Acton's excitement at writing about a family in which there were so many men who were outrageously homosexual, the most outrageous of them being the very last ruling Medici, the Grand Duke Gian Gastone. In the Biblioteca Morenaiana, in Florence, Acton used a seventeenth-century manuscript, which gave a raunchy account of Gastone's activities:

> Whenever a novice was introduced, the Grand Duke would praise him and examine his teeth to see whether they were white—it pleased him if they were; if he were fair and had a sweet breath, and if he walked with ease. After that he bade him be seated on his bed, and plied him with rissoles. Then he groped and felt his parts to see that he had a good store of strength and if he grew excited instantly. . . . Frantically they abused each other, with the hands or mouth and in devious other ways.

Acton, who had a vivid appreciation of what he called the scandalous, clearly loved having this manuscript as a source. He also translated it, and the translation is called "The Last of the Medici." It was privately printed in Florence, in 1930, by Giuseppe Orioli, who had printed "Lady Chatterley's Lover." Norman Douglas wrote in the introduction to this explicit account of seventeenth-century sex, "I am not anxious to pose as a prude, but, absorbing as this book is, I should hesitate to recommend it to any boy under twelve years of age."

Many people have praised "The Last Medici," but when it was published, in 1932, it was not well received by reviewers. Acton was again disappointed. He wrote in his memoirs that a longing for China made him go there, but the reader's suspicion is that he wanted to get away when he found that his life as a writer in England was not going as well as he had expected. He went to China in 1932; he lectured at Peking University and learned Mandarin Chinese and translated Chinese poetry. Lambton thinks that Acton was deeply influenced by China—that, though it couldn't have been more foreign to him, it gave him a sense of belonging that he had never had at La Pietra.

By the late thirties, Nazi flags had begun to appear on the private rickshaws of Germans living in Peking, and in 1939 Acton left. A compatriot of his in China, Lady Chancellor, told me that he had two pantechnicons loaded with all the Chinese antiques he had bought for himself, and both of them were sunk at sea. This was the only serious collecting he ever did.

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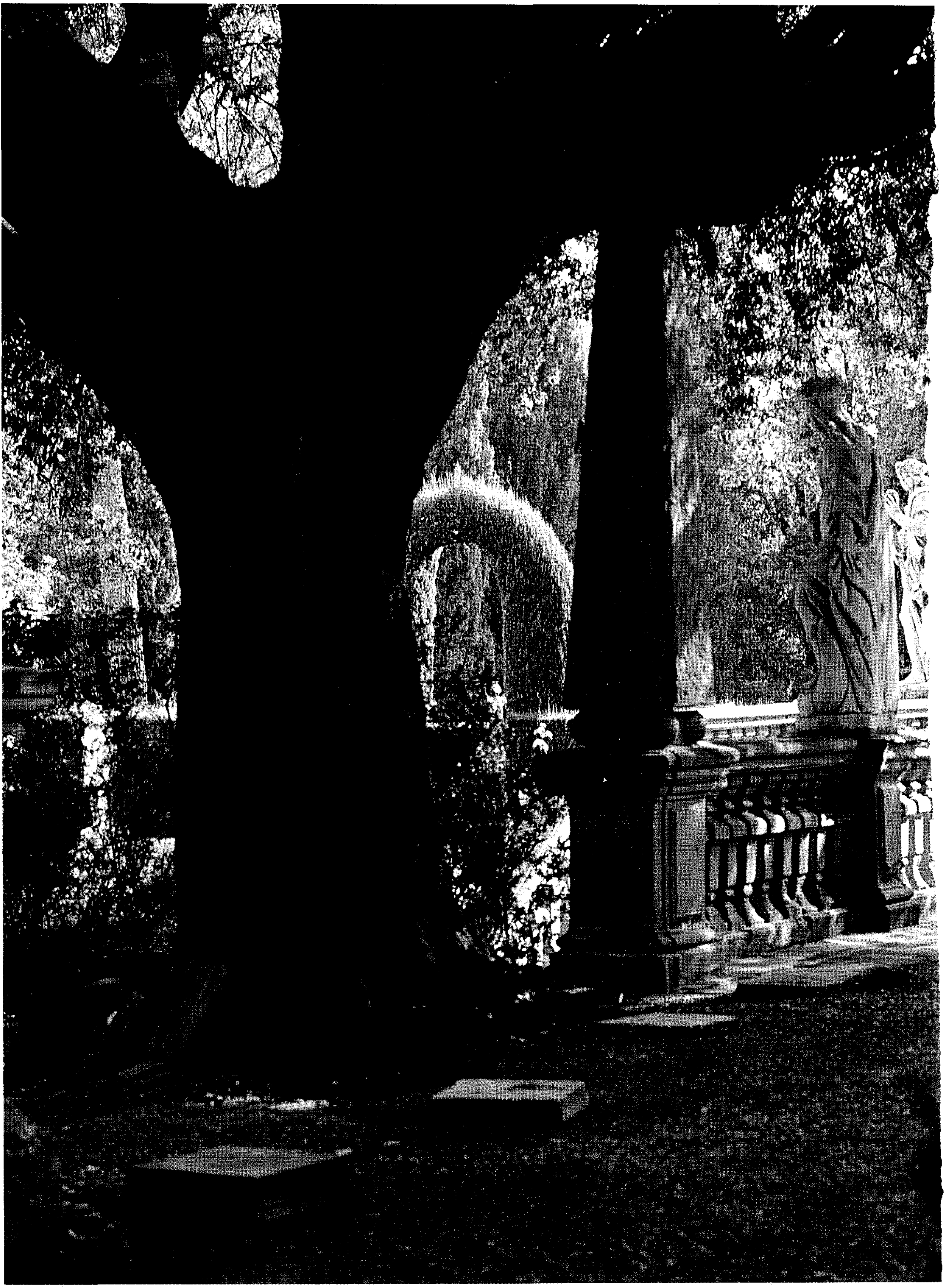
ACTON returned to England by way of Japan, Honolulu (he visited an American cousin who had built a copy of La Pietra on the side of Diamond Head), and Canada. In London, Acton found himself back in drawing rooms chatting with Sir Thomas Beecham and Chips Channon and Lady Diana Cooper. "When I am told that I talk better than I write the compliment leaves me cold," he wrote in his memoirs, but Lambton says he believes it was precisely because Acton was so brilliant at conversation—"the last great traditional conversationalist"—that he was such a social success. Alan Pryce-Jones agrees, saying that Acton was "the best talker I've ever known," especially on the subject of people, about whom he was very funny. The art historian John Fleming told me that Acton had a music-hall comedian's sense of timing, making hand gestures and rolling his eyes at the most effective moments, appearing to be shocked by what he himself said. He might tell the story of how his mother, on a visit to the Sitwells, asked for a



DERRY MOORE

Another Eden: The 1904 gardens needed to be refurbished, but Sir Harold refused to change t

was like a character out of Henry James, a nineteenth-century figure living on his own isolated hill.

bathroom and was taken down a long passage into Lady Ida's bedroom, where she was given—here Acton would pause, then say the rest quickly, with the last word as if sung out on a high note—a chamber pot!

Not despite but perhaps because of his position in society, Acton had a strong sense of duty. He did his part in trying to improve relations between England and still neutral Fascist Italy by persuading the then recently formed British Council to send him to Italy on a lecture tour. He argued that relations between the two countries were culturally deep, and he emphasized the influence of Italy on English poetry, architecture, and manners. He went from Milan to Palermo, and at the end of the tour he stayed at La Pietra with his parents. Even under Fascism, he found "copious luncheons and tea-parties" given by marchesas and contessas. Mrs. Keppel, who was famous for having been the "friend" of King Edward VII, continued to entertain at her villa. Acton saw many women of the old Anglo-Florentine world, and "with few exceptions the ladies adored the dictator"—Mussolini—"as a superman."

When Acton was sure that Italy would enter the war, he left for Paris, "despondently"—"troubled about my parents, thinking of all the Italians who loathed the Axis Powers yet were obliged to do their patriotic duty." He saw a few plays in Paris and went on to London just before the declaration of total war. In London, Acton found it "extraordinary how social life persisted between and during air-raids." He had applied to be taken into the Royal Air Force, and in May of 1941 he was finally accepted. He hoped to be sent back to China as an intelligence officer, but, as he learned, he was classified officially and secretly as a "scandalous debauchee" and was not allowed to go there. He was sent instead to India, in what he called a "lowly secretarial capacity." He had a kidney removed, and during two months he spent in bed he had no news of his parents, in Florence, or of his brother, William, who he knew had been inducted into the Pioneer Corps. After his recuperation, he was repatriated to England, but not before he was able to take a tour and see the tombs of the Mogul rulers. "Unlike our tombs," he writes in his memoirs, "these are pleasure pavilions in gardens kept green by channels of running water, with roses to bloom by day and jasmine by night, and trees full of blossom or fruit or singing birds."

Back in London, in May of 1944, Acton learned that his parents were safe in Switzerland. They had remained at La Pietra as long as they could, but one day, while his father was out, his mother was arrested by the Fascists as an enemy. She had used a false birth date in her passport, as many women did, and, though the Fascists knew that she was by law too old to be arrested, they insisted on the age in her passport, and she was put in a cell with prostitutes. When Mrs. Acton's maid sought help for her through a powerful friend, the response was "We're at war, we're enemies." Acton's mother was released after three days and three nights. She and her husband managed, by bribing, to get into Switzerland, but no one knew the whereabouts of William.

Acton was now attached to a press censorship unit to vet military communiqués before they were released to reporters. On August 11, 1944, he read, with relief, that central Florence was in Allied hands. He was sent to Paris to continue his work; his unit's headquarters were at the Scribe Hotel. He was in Paris for the Liberation and for parties given at the British Embassy by the Ambassador, Duff Cooper, and his wife, Lady Diana, who "filled the Embassy with wits and beauties, poets, painters and musicians." Acton also saw Cocteau and Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas and Marie-Laure de Noailles and Picasso.

Then Acton went to Minden, Germany, to join the Air Information Unit there, and finally he had a letter from William: released from the Pioneer Corps, he had returned to Italy, and was thus the first of his family to see La Pietra after the war. Though it had been occupied by Germans and then by the Allies, the villa was in good condition. But the shocking news about William, which followed the letter, was that he was dead. Joan Haslip told me she was sure that William had committed suicide shortly after he arrived home in Italy. Mrs. Acton didn't want to go back to Florence, but Arthur Acton's whole life was La Pietra, and the parents, to whom William was the favorite son, returned broken. Soon afterward, Harold, duty-bound, returned to La Pietra to live with them for the rest of their lives.

ACTON hated his father, who he suspected had a number of illegitimate children; he always feared that one of them would claim rights to the villa. (He sometimes referred to a half sister who lived in Florence and kept a shop, saying, "I know nothing about that woman!") And, though he loved his mother, she was an alcoholic and seemed not to love him. The actor Peter Eyre, who is a distant relative of Acton's, remembers being with him in the garden of La Pietra and hearing, long before he saw her appear in an upstairs window, the pearl necklace of Acton's mother rattling down the side of a wall of the villa, then her leaning out of a window drunkenly and calling him, and his running at a tilt to her. The Florentine art historian Luisa Vertova Nicolson, who as a young woman lived a Berenson's I Tatti, recalls Acton having tea with Berenson, to whom he would *sfogarsi*, or let off steam—first about his father, whom he considered to be vulgar both in his affairs with women and in always putting a price on works of art (in fact, Berenson refused to study the collection of Arthur Acton to confirm attributions, because he didn't think Acton was respectable), and then, after the old man died, about his mother, who was so formal, so cold. He was given a small daily allowance by the butler, and as he had no latchkey he had to be back at the villa at night before the servants went to bed.

He longed, as he once told the writer James Lord, for "the Bluebird of happiness." He continued to write, concentrating again on history, this time Neapolitan. "The Bourbons of Naples," published in 1956, and "The Last Bourbons of Naples," published in 1961, have as a major character his putative ancestor John Acton. These books have their admirers, including Lambton, but they don't really come to life. (Though the art historian Hugh Honour thinks them briskly done, he told me that, in researching an article, he found, in Benedetto Croce's "Uomini e Cose Della

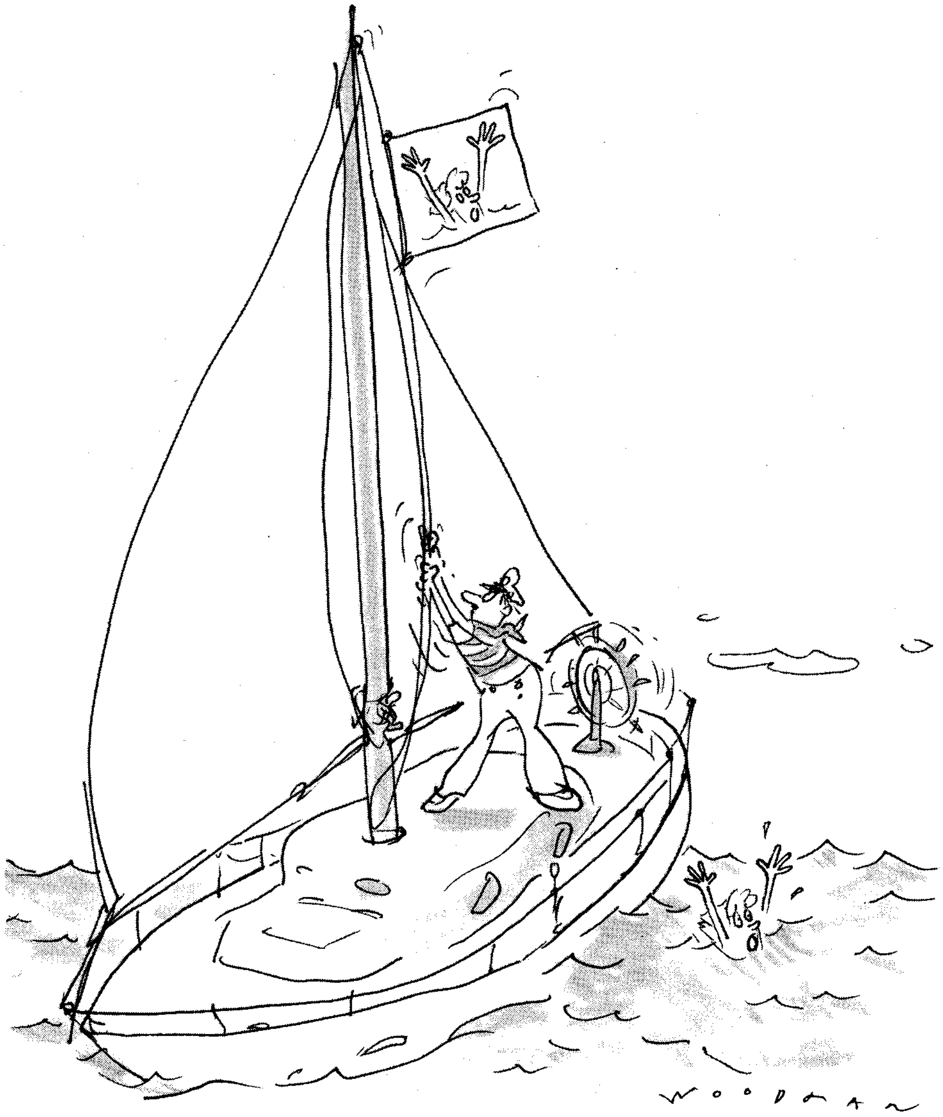
Vecchia Italia," a passage about an archbishop which Acton had simply lifted out, translated into English, and inserted in his own book.) When Eyre saw Acton in Naples, he noticed that away from La Pietra Acton appeared quite ordinary—a man in a seersucker suit who was there as much for the boys as for his research.

Acton's father died in 1953, and his mother, at the age of ninety, in 1962. Acton kept writing—another novel, "Old Lamps for New," and two collections of short stories—but if he still had no success as a writer of fiction he had greater and greater success as the owner of La Pietra. His villa became his theatre, says Eyre, who recalls visiting Acton some time after his mother's death and pulling the bell at the gate and seeing, down the long, cypress-lined avenue, the villa light up like a fairy palace. Thekla Clark, an American who has lived most of her life in Florence, said to me, "Harold was an actor, was a star, and as a star he never let anyone down in his performances." He was in especially good form at his luncheon and dinner parties, which occurred, Lambton says, almost every day. There were four or five courses, and the table was decorated with petals arranged by the butler. And Acton would discuss, say, the gardens of Tuscany, which he knew about not only historically but socially, so he would have as much to say about the families that owned them as about the statues and fountains.

The social world that his guests came from changed as he got older. Claus von Bülow remembers being invited to the annual luncheon party that was given for Acton in London by Lady Aberconway, at which Osbert and Sacheverell Sitwell, Cecil Beaton, Kenneth Clark, and L. P. Hartley were present. But all these people, as well as Acton's old Oxford friends, died before he did. Thekla Clark has said, "He became, himself, his own social world." I said to her that someone had once told me that Harold Acton was not an aesthete but a socialite, and she said, "But for Harold being an aesthete and being a socialite were the same!" He liked variety, and, except for the attractive young men who were his favorites and whom he invited again and again until they got fat and lost their looks, he had few close friends in the latter part of his life. He entertained an awful lot of bores.

Then the Royals began to accept his invitations to stay, and Acton, according to von Bülow, became "the host with the most." Princess Margaret was, Selina Hastings told me, "his first big catch," though he complained that she kept him up until four o'clock in the morning listening to dance music he couldn't bear. But it was having the Prince and Princess of Wales to stay, shortly after their wedding, that was his greatest social coup. A story went around of the royal couple's equerry telling Acton that a visit was planned to the Church of San Miniato, above Florence, where there would be crowds of reporters and photographers, which, he imagined, Acton would not enjoy—but Acton apparently replied that he would quite like to see San Miniato again. He appeared everywhere in Florence as the royal couple's guide, and newspaper and television coverage often showed Acton with them, smiling, in the throngs that always formed about them. After Charles and Diana's visit together, Charles continued to visit La Pietra on his own, and did watercolors of views of Florence from the villa. Privately, Acton complained a lot about what a strain it was on him to have the Royals—how expensive it was, how inconvenient, and how tight the security had to be, with guards walking about the villa and garden, which meant that he couldn't move around freely. But all that the world saw was Acton as the host.

ONE afternoon in Florence, I spoke at length about Acton and La Pietra with the architect Giuseppe Chigiotti, who was a close friend of Acton's, particularly in his last years. In his office near the Church of Santo Spirito, Chigiotti, an attractive, clear-faced man with delicate eyelashes, told me he had just found out that he'd inherited, in the



words of Acton's last will and testament, "all the paintings I own by Umberto Brunelleschi." He showed me one of these works—a watercolor from the nineteen-twenties of a costume design by Brunelleschi, who was a designer for the Folies-Bergère.

Chigiotti described Acton's funeral, in the Church of San Marco, in Florence. It was very solemn, with *gonfalonieri* in full dress flanking the coffin. John Pope-Hennessy was the first mourner to arrive; then came Joan Haslip, looking rather like a widow. (She had hoped to be left something by Acton, but she got nothing.) The butler, the cook, and the head gardener (he, alone of all the domestics, was left five million lire, or about three thousand dollars) were present, and a few people from the Florentine aristocracy. Florence was represented by many officials, and the British Ambassador gave a reading. A young distant kinsman of Acton's appeared, wearing a hat with a feather, and was shown to the front of the church. But there seemed to be no representatives of the Royals, not even an equerry.

Chigiotti held up his hands and shrugged.

Could he tell me why Acton left nothing to Florence, which had made him an honorary citizen? Chigiotti said that Acton's relationship with Florence was "*un po' complicato.*" Certainly Florence had hoped to get something. The Uffizi wanted the Vasari, and the Bargello museum wanted one or two statues. But Acton knew that the Bardini collection, which had been given to the city, had been destroyed by being dispersed, and he did not want La Pietra to be destroyed in the same way. There were other reasons, however, that Acton didn't leave anything to Florence, and these went back to the way the Fascists had treated his mother. After the war, Mrs. Acton had refused to have anything to do not only with the Florentines who had been Fascists but with all Italians, and had spent most of her time in the villa, dressed in Chinese Mandarin clothes, drinking. Luisa Vertova Nicolson says that Mrs. Acton had so repudiated Italy that she would go all the way to Switzerland to have her hair done.

Florence had never taken much interest in the Actons anyway. The Florentine aristocracy was made up of provincial snobs, who had few relations with foreigners, and what relations they did have were sexual, not social. (Though Acton's father's lovers included Florentine women, his possible illegitimacy certainly did not help him socially. All the information Harold Acton gives about his father's past in "More Memoirs of an Aesthete" is "As an orphan he had been brought up by priests.") By the time Acton did impress Florence, by having the Royals stay, he had lost interest in the city. But thereafter he was invited everywhere in Florence, and, out of curiosity as much as a sense of duty, he went. He was more and more disappointed. He had thought that the city had something for him—that he would discover a Florence of interesting people, like the Florence of the twenties and thirties, when Orioli was publishing the sexually explicit books that couldn't be published elsewhere and there was still an Italian avant-garde. He didn't find it.

Though he didn't think his life's work was to be the custodian, the *vestale*, of La Pietra, what else was there for him to be? Because of La Pietra, Acton became worldly in a way that he did not want to be. He became something of a tourist attraction in Florence, showing his gardens to strangers from England and America who had heard about La Pietra. He became, Chigiotti said, a prisoner, not only of his duties toward La Pietra but of his own illusions about his fame. Every time he walked down the Via Tornabuoni, he imagined that people recognized him. Chigiotti would tell Acton about places he'd been to for a bit of amusement, and Acton, who was always very curious about anything that had to do with sex, would say, Oooh, he wished he could go, but how could he, with La Pietra on his shoulders? His grand sense of *ufficialità*, especially after the Royals began to visit, caused him to worry about any sexual scandal that might reflect on them as his guests.

For many young homosexual men, however, La Pietra was an entrée into a world they had fantasized about. Acton learned to use the villa. The young friends of older friends were always welcome, and no doubt a handsome young man of twenty to twenty-five would be much impressed by Acton's inviting him

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ITHACA

The beloved doesn't
need to live. The beloved
lives in the head. The loom
is for the suitors, strung up
like a harp with white shroud-thread.

He was two people.
He was the body and voice, the easy
magnetism of a living man, and then
the unfolding dream or image
shaped by the woman working the loom,
sitting there in a hall filled
with literal-minded men.

As you pity
the deceived sea that tried
to take him away forever
and took only the first,
the actual husband, you must
pity these men: they don't know
what they're looking at;
they don't know that when one loves this way
the shroud becomes a wedding dress.

—Louise Glück

into his humble house. The British novelist Paul Bailey visited Acton as a young man, and what he remembers vividly is that when he leaned forward to inspect a work of art in the villa Acton suddenly goosed him.

What, I asked Chigiotti, did he think New York University would do with La Pietra? It seemed unlikely to everyone I spoke to that the university's idea—to maintain the villa as Acton had specified and redo four large outbuildings for academic use—could be realized on the interest from the estimated twenty-five-million-dollar endowment Acton had provided, what with renovation costs and upkeep and the need for a full-time director and staff. Chigiotti said that the villa had been a white elephant even when Acton was alive. Acton had lived in five rooms—his small study, the library (but only to pass through to go to his study), the drawing room, the dining room, and his bedroom. There are only a few pieces of museum value, uch as the Vasari; the rest, including he Italian-primitive works of Mariotto i Nardo, are of the second rank. The use f La Pietra would need careful consideration, or it would become simply a storehouse for old furniture and paintings. Perhaps Acton's final unrealizable fantasy was that La Pietra would be an enduring center of culture and of the aesthetic pleasures that culture at its best is meant to preserve and praise.

CHIGIOTTI arranged for me to speak to Acton's last butler, Marco d'Alessandro. I made a date to meet him in the Caffè Gilli, in the Piazza della Repubblica. A tall, handsome man with black hair combed back from a high forehead, he waited for me to sit before he sat. He seemed embarrassed to order anything, and chose a simple cappuccino.

Il barone, he said, never, never asked for anything. The villa subscribed to a listing of classical-music broadcasts, and d'Alessandro would choose what music he thought *il barone* would like, perhaps some Spanish guitar music. If something came on that d'Alessandro thought wasn't to *il barone's* liking, such as Stravinsky, d'Alessandro would ask him if he would prefer it to be turned off, and he would say yes, thank you. (What struck me about this was that Acton had obviously lost all the enthusiasm he had had for the modernists when he was young.) Even when he was in bed and sunlight was shining through an open shutter onto his face, he wouldn't ask d'Alessandro to close the shutter, so the butler would do it himself, and then *il barone* would thank him. It was said that his mind was going in the last years, but d'Alessandro never thought this was true. Acton retained his curiosity. But he had no one to talk with. D'Alessandro would serve him his meals alone in the dining room, and would sometimes stand nearby so *il barone* could talk to him. He knew his place, but as a university graduate he could talk to *il barone* about literature. Shortly before Acton died, in February, he asked d'Alessandro how long it would be before spring came, and when d'Alessandro said, "A month, Signor Barone," he replied, "That's too long." A little later, he fell in the garden and hurt his head. He began to fall more and more.

I had heard a story about how Acton fell while Princess Margaret was staying at La Pietra. As it was protocol for her to be the first to rise from the dinner table and for others to stand immediately after she did, Acton, rising quickly, fell over, and, while the other guests rushed to help him up, the Princess stood aside and said to him, "I told you to carry a stick."

As *il barone* got sicker and stayed in his room, d'Alessandro noticed that objects would be shifted about from day to day, and then disappear altogether.

After the death of *il barone*, d'Alessandro found that everything he did was criticized by Zielcke. As for Vanna, she had put in enough years to claim a proper pension, which she was not going to give up, so she went to the villa as often as she could, even if it was just to prepare coffee. On one of d'Alessandro's free days, a new secretary who had been taken on after Acton's death called him at home to tell him, without explanation, that he was no longer needed at La Pietra.

WHEN I last saw Acton in Florence, he was well over eighty, and he seemed not to have changed since his sixties. He greeted me in the drawing room and made Oriental gestures of welcome, leaning forward a little and rolling his hands on his wrists. The skin on his long face and bald head appeared tight. He started almost every sentence with "Oooh" and spoke with an accent that often put a strong emphasis on one syllable of a word and often put a word in an odd place in a sentence: "Oooh, you will tell me about people in *Lon*don."

He asked me, as he always did, if I would like to see the garden, and as we walked past the statues among the cypresses he told me, as he always did, how the cocks of the statues had been knocked off. (Lambton suggested to me that Acton had never restored the statues because he enjoyed talking about his "problem": Should he replace the "appendages" or, instead, attach fig leaves, which would, by the bulge in them, suggest "something substantial underneath"?) Acton retained his curious, lightly jerking walk.

He said as we walked back to the villa that his Tuscan kitchen would produce a very modest meal, not up to the culinary delights he was sure I was used to. We had spaghetti to start, then slices of beef with peas. Acton said he could hardly leave his house now for fear that it would be broken into. It had already been broken into eight times. A painting by Bernardo Daddi was taken off a wall and had never been recovered. He couldn't trust anyone, not even the people on his staff. They didn't do their jobs properly—were, in fact, quite useless—but what was one to do today, when good help simply could not be found? He delicately shrugged his broad shoulders and pressed his thin lips together. He envied people who weren't dependent on staff, but what could one do? To give up his staff would be to give up La Pietra. "How times have changed," he said. "When my parents were alive, they had a staff of thirty-five. I have only a staff of twelve, and I don't dare ask them for anything."

When he started to talk about a recently published novel that he thought terrible, he became violently angry. He called the writer—a woman—a bitch, a slut, a third-rate whore. He said, "Yes, art excuses all. With art one can write about anything, *any*thing. But that novel is too bad even to say about it that it was *written*." He was raging.

To get him onto a subject that would

make him less aggressive, I asked him what his favorite work of his own was. He raised his hands and said he always reread his work with great embarrassment.

I said, "All writers do that. The fact is, we don't really know if what we write is good or bad."

He bowed his head and said, "Oooh, that is true."

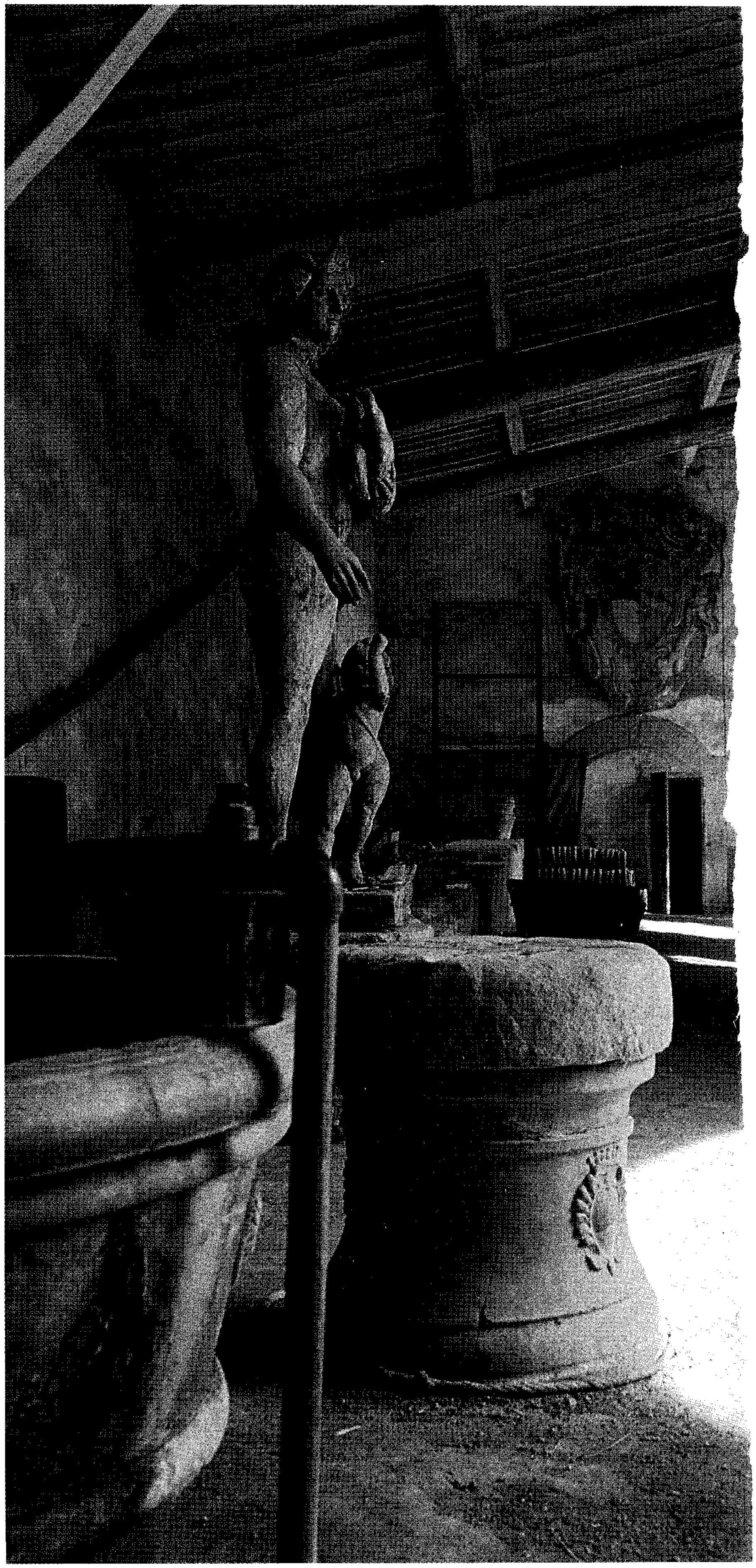
After lunch, Acton asked me if I'd like a nap, since the train I was to take to London was to leave in the evening. He asked a maid to prepare *la camera blu*, a huge, high-ceilinged room with a great bed and tapestries and paintings on the walls, and a view of the cypress avenue to the gates from the high windows. After he left me, I helped the maid put linen sheets on the bed. She also brought in an old electric heater, because Acton said the room was cold. I undressed and got into bed and looked at the room beyond the gilded, spiralling columns at the corners of the bed.

It came to me that Harold Acton had once been a fantasy figure to me, as he might have been to any young provincial American who confused literary and worldly ambition. In fact, Acton's world was like the one depicted in the vast number of mostly forgotten nineteenth-century novels left over the years by Anglo-Florentines to the library of the British Institute in Florence—novels in which the world of the rich, the elegant, and the well-connected was set apart. In that world, the young American might fancy, he could rise above not only his provincialism but his sexual identity, and live a purely aesthetic life. Now, as I lay among the unravelling tapestries, this naïve fantasy was exposed as threadbare. And this came to me as a relief.

Acton was waiting for me in the drawing room for tea before I left, and he continued to gossip about people in London, mostly homosexual men. He was as he had once been, when his talk was all lightness and charm, with pauses that left you suspended in mid-sentence.

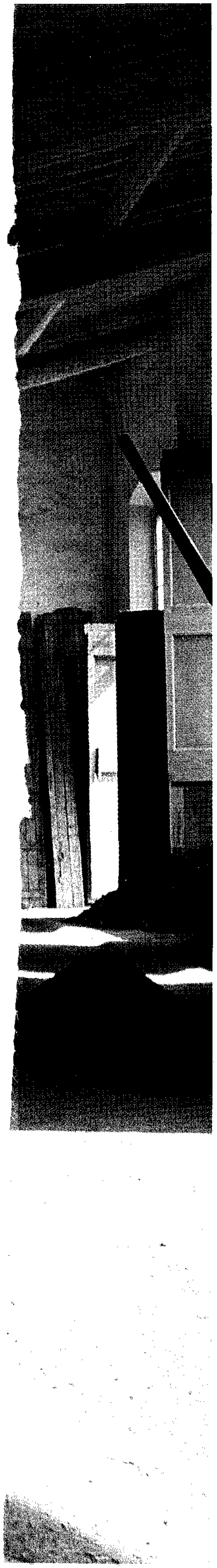
He said, "I am preparing for my departure"—he smiled a little—"to *Switz*erland."

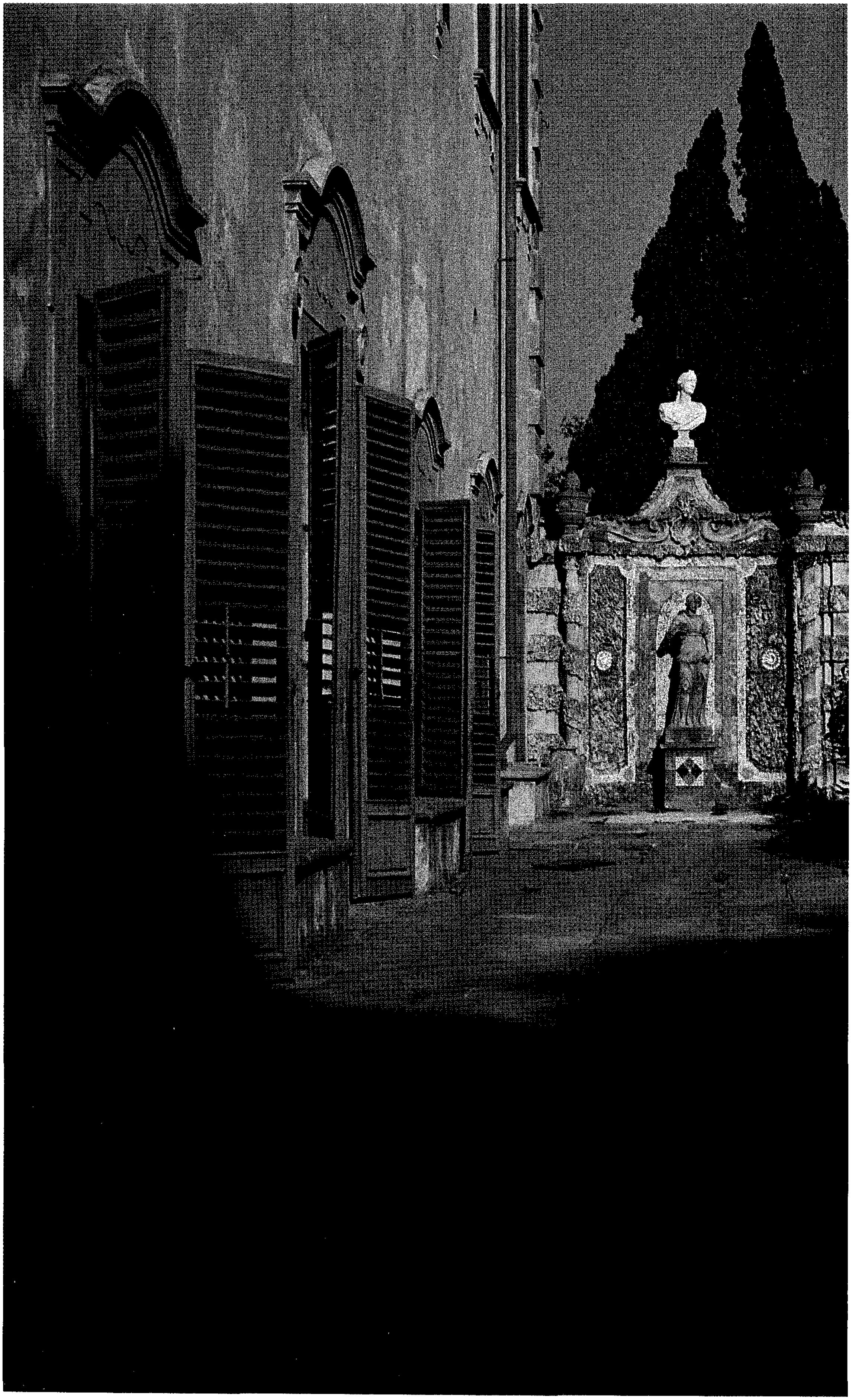
After tea, I walked along the cypress avenue to the gate and got on a crowded bus that took me into the center of Florence. ◆



DERRY MOORE

The limonaia and a side terrace. In Florenc



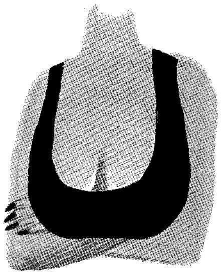


old created a refuge from a disapproving England, following in the tradition of the Brownings.

FICTION

DRENKA'S MEN

BY PHILIP ROTH



UNABLE to sleep, Sabbath lay beside Roseanna overcome by a stupendous, deforming emotion of which he had never before had firsthand knowledge. He was jealous now of the very men about whom, when Drenka was living, he could never hear enough. He thought about the men she had met in elevators, airports, parking lots, department stores, at hotel-association conferences and food conventions, men she had to have because their looks appealed to her, men she slept with just once or had prolonged flings with, men who five and six years after she'd last been to bed with them would unexpectedly phone the inn to extoll her, to praise her, often without sparing the graphic obscenities to tell her how she was the least-inhibited woman they had ever known. He remembered her explaining to him—because he had asked her to—what exactly made her choose one man in a room over another, and now he felt like the most foolishly innocent of husbands who uncovers the true history of an unfaithful wife—he felt as stupid as the holy simpleton Dr. Charles Bovary. The diabolical pleasure this had once afforded him! The happiness! When she was alive, nothing excited or entertained him more than hearing, detail by detail, the stories of her second life. Her *third* life—*he* was the second. "It's a very physical feeling that I get," she said. "It's the appearance, it's something chemical, I almost would like to say. There's an energy that I sense. It makes me very aroused and I feel it then, I become sexualized, and I feel it in my nipples. I feel it inside, in my body. If he is physical, if he is strong, the way he walks, the way he sits, the way he's himself, if he's juicy. Guys with small dry lips, they turn me off, or if they smell bookish—you know, this dry pencil smell of men. I often look at their hands to see if they have strong, expressive hands. Then I imagine that they have a big dick. If there is any truth to this I don't know, but I do it anyway as a little research. Some kind of confidence in the way they move. It isn't that they have to look elegant—it is, rather, an animalistic appearance under the elegance. So it's a very intuitive thing. And I know it right away and I have always known it. And so I say, 'O.K., I go and fuck him.' Well, I have to open the channels for him. So I look at him and I flirt with him. I just start laughing or show my legs and sort of show him that it's all right. Sometimes I make a real bold gesture. 'I wouldn't mind having an affair with you.' Yeah," she said, laughing at the extent of her own impulsiveness, "I could say something like that. That guy I had in Aspen, I felt his interest. But he was in his fifties and there I always question how hard can they get. With a younger guy you know it's an easier thing. With an older one you don't know. But I felt this kind of vibration and I was really turned on. And, you know, you move your arm closer or he moves his arm closer and you know you're in this aura of sexual feeling together and everybody else in the room is excluded. I think with that man I actually openly stated that it was O.K., that I was interested."

The boldness with which she went after them! The ardor and skill with which she aroused them! The delight she found in watching them jerk off! And the pleasure she then took in telling all she'd learned about lust and what it is for men . . . and the torment all this was to him now. He'd not had the faintest idea that he could feel such distress. "What I enjoyed was to see how they were by themselves. That I could be the observer there, and to see how they played with their dick and how it was formed, the shape of it, and when it became hard, and also the way they held their hand—it turned me on. Everybody jerks their dick differently. And when they abandon themselves into it, when they allow themselves to abandon themselves, this is very exciting. And to see them come that way. This Lewis guy, he was in his sixties and he'd never jerked off, he said, in front of a woman. And he was sort of holding his hand this way"—she turned her wrist so that the little finger was at the top of her fist and the second knuckle of her thumb at the bottom—"well, to see that particularity of it and, as I say, to see when they get so hot they can't stop themselves in spite of being shy, that's very exciting. That's what I like best—watching them lose control." The shy ones she would softly suck for a few minutes and then place their hands for them on themselves and help them along until they were safely into it and on their own. Then, beginning lightly to finger herself, she would lean back and look on. When she next saw Sabbath she would demonstrate to him the peculiar "particularity" of each man's technique. He was tremendously stirred by this . . . and now it made him jealous, maddeningly jealous—now that she was dead he wanted to shake her and shout at her and tell her to stop. "Only me! Fuck your husband when you have to, but otherwise, no one but me!"

In fact, he didn't want her to fuck Matija either. Him least of all. On the rare occasions when she used to report those details to Sabbath, too, they had hardly engrossed him, provoked not the slightest erotic interest. Yet now there was barely a night when he was free of the mortifying memory of Drenka allowing her husband to take her like a wife. "Checking Matija in bed, I saw his erection. I was certain he would not act on it without my taking first initiative, so quickly I undressed. I could not get aroused even if I had strong, tender feelings for my husband. Seeing his hard cock, smaller than yours, Mickey, and with a foreskin, which when the skin is pulled down is much redder than yours . . . thinking about the way we had just fucked . . . well, longing for your big, hard dick, it was almost pain-

FILIP PAGOWSKI

ful. How could I abandon myself to this man who loves me? When he penetrated me, lying on top of me, Matija was moaning louder than I ever recollect. It was almost as if he was crying. Since it never takes him long to come, the whole thing was over soon. After sleeping one or two hours I woke up sick to my stomach. I had to throw up and take some Mylanta."

How dare he! What chutzpah! Sabbath wanted to murder Matija. And why didn't I? Why didn't *we*? Uncircumcised dog! Smite him *thus!*

One brilliantly sunny day back in February, Sabbath had come upon Drenka's widowered husband up at the Stop & Shop in Cumberland. For the first time that winter it hadn't snowed in four consecutive days and so, after donning an old knit seaman's cap in which to swab down the bathroom and kitchen floors and give the house a vacuuming, Sabbath had driven up to Cumberland—blinded much of the way by the light off the gargantuan drifts banked at the side of the road—to do the grocery shopping, one of his weekly household chores. And there was Matija, almost unrecognizable since he'd seen him silent and stonefaced at the funeral. His black hair had gone white, completely white in just the three months. He looked so weak, so slight, his face emaciated—and all of this in just three months! He could have passed for a senior citizen, older even than Sabbath, and he was only in his mid-fifties. The inn was closed every year from New Year's Day to April 1st, and so Matija was out shopping for the few things he needed living alone in the Baliches' big new house up from the lake and the inn.

Balich was directly behind him in the checkout line and, though he nodded when Sabbath looked his way, registered no recognition.

"Mr. Balich, my name is Mickey Sabbath."

"Yes? How do you do?"

"Does 'Mickey Sabbath' mean anything to you?"

"Yes," said Balich kindly after feigning a moment's thought, "I believe you have been a patron of mine. I recognize you from the inn."

"No," said Sabbath. "I live in Madamaska Falls but we don't eat out much."

"I see," replied Balich and, after smiling for a few seconds more, sombrely returned to his thoughts.

"I'll tell you how we know each other," said Sabbath.

"Yes?"

"My wife was your son's art teacher at the high school. Roseanna Sabbath. She and your Matthew became great friends."

"Ahhh." Again he smiled courteously.

Sabbath had never realized before how much there was in Drenka's husband of the subdued and courtly European gentleman. Maybe it was the white hair, the grief, the accent, but he had about him the magisterial air of a senior diplomat from a small country. No, Sabbath hadn't known this about him, the dignified composure came as a surprise, but then the other guy is often just a blur. Even if he's your best friend or the fellow across the street who more than once has jump-started your car, he *becomes* a blur. He becomes *the husband*, and sympathetic imagination dwindles away, right along with conscience.

Now, down in the abandoned center of Cumberland, where the movie theatre was long gone and the stores mostly vacant, there was an impoverished wreck of a grocery where Sabbath liked to get a container of coffee and drink it standing up right there after he'd done the weekly shopping. The place, Flo 'n Bert's, was dark, with dirty, worn wooden floors, undusted shelves largely empty of goods, and the most wretched potatoes and bananas Sabbath had ever seen for sale anywhere. But Flo 'n Bert's, grisly mortuary though it was, smelled exactly like the old grocery in the basement of the LaReine Arms, a block away from their house, where Sabbath used to go first thing every morning to get two fresh rolls for his mother so she could make Morty sandwiches to take to his high school for lunch—cream cheese and olive, peanut butter and jelly, but mainly canned tuna, the sandwiches double-wrapped with wax paper and stuffed in the paper bag from the LaReine Arms. Each week, after Stop & Shop, Sabbath walked around Flo 'n Bert's with his coffee container in his hand, trying to figure out what the ingredients were that went into that smell, which was also like something he smelled up at the Grotto in late autumn, after the fallen leaves and the dying underbrush had been dampened down by the rains and begun to rot. Maybe it was that: damp rot. He loved it. The coffee that he had to drink there was undrinkable but he could never resist the pleasure of that smell.

Sabbath stationed himself outside the door to Stop & Shop and, when Balich emerged carrying a plastic bag in either hand, he said, "Mr. Balich, how about a hot cup of coffee?"

"Thank you, sir, no."

"Come on," said Sabbath good-naturedly, "why not? It's ten degrees out here." Should he convert that into Celsius for him, as he would for Drenka when she telephoned, before going up to the Grotto, to ask what it *really* was outside? "There's a place down the hill. Follow me. The Chevy. A cup of coffee to warm you up."

Leading Balich's car between the one-story-high snowbanks and across the railroad tracks agleam from the frost, Sabbath had to admit that he had no idea what he was planning to do. All he could think of was this guy daring to lie across his Drenka, moaning with pleasure as though he were crying, penetrating her with a dog-red cock that afterward made her throw up.

Yes, it was time that he and Balich met—to go through life without meeting him face to face would be making life too easy for himself. He would long ago have died of boredom without his extensive difficulties.

The putrid coffee was poured from the Silex by a sullen, stupid girl in her late teens who had been a sullen, stupid girl in her late teens ever since Sabbath had begun dropping in to smell Flo 'n Bert's some fifteen years back. Maybe they were all from the same family, daughters of Flo and Bert who successively grew into the job, or maybe, more likely, there was an inexhaustible supply of these girls turned out by the Cumberland school system. On-the-prowl, insinuating, unselective Sabbath had never been able to get anything more than a grunt out of any of them.

Involuntarily Balich made a face when he tasted the coffee, which turned out to be about as cold as the day—

but politely said, "Oh no, very good, but one is enough," when Sabbath asked if he'd like a second cup.

"It has not been easy for you without your wife," Sabbath said. "You look very thin."

"These have been dark days," Balich replied.

"Still?"

He nodded sadly. "It's awful still. I'm right at the bottom. After thirty-one years, I'm in my third month of a new regime. Somehow in some ways every day it gets worse."

That it does. "And your son?"

"He's in a bit of a state of shock, too. He misses her terribly. But he's young, he's strong. Sometimes, his wife tells me, in the dark hours of the night . . . but he seems to be coping."

"That's good," Sabbath said. "That is about the strongest bond in the world, the mother and the little boy. There couldn't be anything stronger."

"Yes, yes," said Balich, his soft gray eyes growing teary from talking to somebody so understanding. "Yes, and when I looked at her dead, with my son at the hospital in the middle of the night . . . she was lying there with all the tubes and when I looked at her and I saw that it was broken, that bond with our son, I could not believe that this strongest thing in the world that you say was no longer in existence. There she was, all her beauty lying there, and that strongest thing wasn't anymore. She was gone. So I kissed her goodbye, my son did and I did, and they took all the tubes out. And this piece of human sunlight was there, but dead."

"How old was she?"

"Fifty-two. It's the most cruel thing that could have happened."

"Of all the people in the world who would have died in their fifties like that," said Sabbath, "I would never have imagined your wife on the list. The few times I ever saw her in town, as you say, she lit up everything. And your son works with you at the inn?"

"Innkeeping is not on my mind at all. Whether that comes back ever, I don't know. I do have a staff of good workers, but innkeeping is not on my mind. Our whole marriage was tied up with the inn. I am thinking of leasing the business. If some Japanese corporation wanted to come along and buy it . . . Every time I go into her office to try to deal with her things, it's awful, it makes me sick. I don't want to be there and I go."

Sabbath had not been mistaken, he thought, to have never written Drenka a single letter or to have insisted that it should be he, and not she, who filed away for safekeeping the Polaroids he'd taken of her at the Bo-Peep.

"The letters," Balich said, looking imploringly toward Sabbath, as though to make an appeal. "Two hundred and fifty-six letters."

"Of consolation?" asked Sabbath, who, of course, had not himself received a single one. When Nikki disappeared, however, he'd got mail about her, care of the theatre. Though by now he'd forgotten how much—maybe fifty letters in all—at the time he'd been stupefied enough to keep a careful count, too.

"Of sympathy, yes. Two hundred and fifty-six. I shouldn't have been amazed at how she lit up everyone's life. I'm getting letters still. And from people I can't even remember. Some came to the inn when we first opened at the other end of the lake. Letters from all kinds of people about her and about how she affected their life. And I believe them. They are true. I got a long two-page letter, a handwritten letter, from the ex-mayor of Worcester."

"Really?"

"He remembers our barbecues for the guests and how she made everyone happy. How she came into the dining room at breakfast and talked to everybody. She just touched everybody. I am strict, I have a rule for everything. Bu she knew how to treat the guests. Everything was always possible for th guests. For her to be pleasant it was never an effort. One owner is strict, the other is flexible and pleasant. We were a perfect pair to make a successful inn. It's amazing what she did. A thousand different things. She did it all gracefully and always with great pleasure. I can't stop dwelling on it. There is nothing that can take away even a little of this misery. It's impossible to believe. One minute here, the next minute not."

The ex-mayor of Worcester? Well, she had secrets from both of us, Matija.

"And what is your son's occupation?"

"A state trooper."

"Married?"

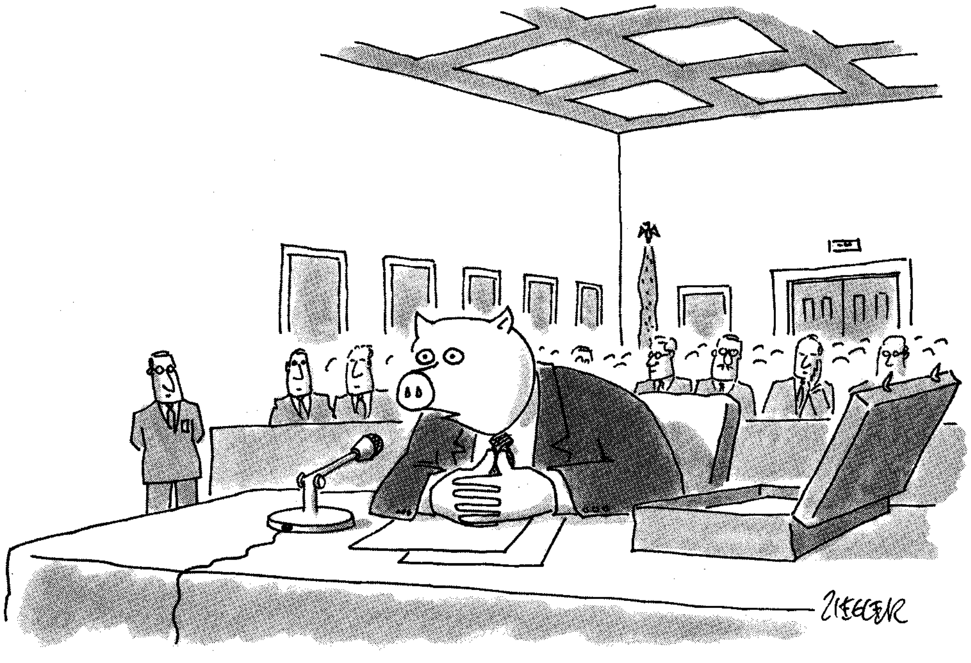
"His wife is pregnant. The baby will be Drenka if it is a girl."

"Drenka?"

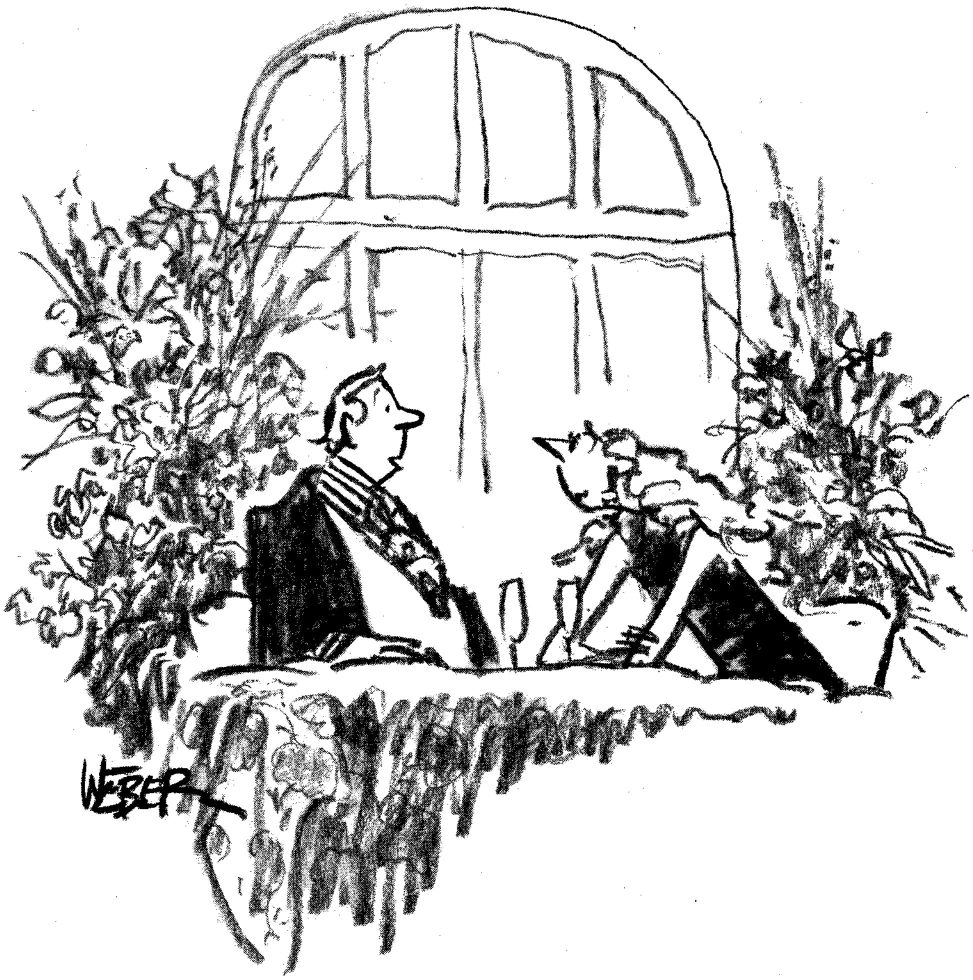
"My wife's name," said Balich. "Drenka, Drenka," he muttered. "There will never be another Drenka."

"Do you see him much, your son?"

"Yes," he lied, unless since



"Your constant cries to cut the pork sadden me, Senator."



"Gee, I'd love to, but that's the weekend my father gets me."

Drenka's death there had been a rapprochement.

Balich suddenly had no more to say. Sabbath used the break to smell the moribund market's smell. Either Balich did not want to talk about his grief over Drenka with a stranger any longer or he did not want to talk about his grief over his state-trooper son who thought innkeeping was a stupid business.

"How come your son isn't a partner in the inn? Why doesn't he take over with you, now that your wife is gone?"

"I see," said Balich after carefully setting his half-full cup on the counter beside the register, "that you have arthritic fingers. This is a painful disorder. My brother has arthritic fingers."

"Really? Silvija's father?" asked Sabbath.

Openly surprised, Balich said, "You know my little niece?"

"My wife met her. My wife told me bout her. She said she was a very, ery pretty and charming child."

"Silvija loved her aunt very much. he worshipped her aunt. Silvija became our daughter, too." In his quiet voice there was little intonation now other than the unmistakable intonation of sorrow.

"Is Silvija at the inn in the summertime? My wife said she was working there to learn English."

"Silvija comes every summer while she is in university."

"What are you doing—training *her* to take over your wife's job?"

"No, no," said Balich, and Sabbath was surprised by how disappointed he was to hear this. "She will be a computer programmer."

"That's too bad," said Sabbath.

"That's what she wants to be," said Balich flatly.

"But if she could help you run the inn, if she could light up the place the way your wife did . . ."

Balich reached into his pocket for money. Sabbath said, "Please—" but Balich was not listening any longer. Doesn't like me, Sabbath thought. Didn't take to me. Must have said the wrong thing.

"My coffee?" Balich asked the sullen girl at the register.

She answered with as few sounded consonants as possible. Other things on her mind.

"What?" Balich asked her.

Sabbath translated. "Half a dollar."

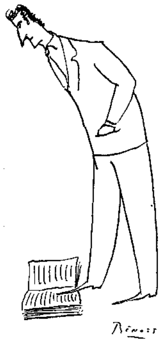
Balich paid and, nodding formally at Sabbath, concluded his initial encounter with someone he clearly did not wish to meet ever again. It was Silvija that had done it, Sabbath's modifying "very" with "very." But that was as close as the puppeteer had come to telling Balich in their first five minutes together that the woman who had vomited after having had to fuck him had had every reason to vomit, because all the while she had been as good as someone else's wife. Of course he understood Balich's feelings—for him, too, the shock of her death was only getting worse by the day—but that didn't mean that Sabbath could forgive him.

FIVE months after her death, a damp, warm April night with a full moon canonizing itself above the tree line, effortlessly floating—luminously blessed—toward the throne of God, Sabbath stretched out on the ground that covered her coffin and said, "You filthy, wonderful Drenka cunt! Marry me! Marry me!" And with his white beard down in the dirt—the plot was still grassless and without a stone—he envisioned his Drenka: it was bright inside the box and she looked just like herself before the cancer stripped her of all that appealing roundness—ripe, full, ready for contact. Tonight she was wearing Silvija's dirndl. And she was laughing at him.

"So now you want me all to yourself. Now," she said, "when you don't have to have only me and live only with me and be bored only by me, now I am good enough to be your wife."

"Marry me!"

Smiling invitingly, she replied, "First you'll have to die," and raised Silvija's dress to reveal that she was without underpants—dark stockings and a garter belt but no underpants. Even dead, Drenka gave him a hard-on; alive *or* dead, Drenka made him twenty again. Even with temperatures below zero, he would grow hard whenever, from her coffin, she enticed him like this. He had learned to stand with his back to the north so that the icy wind did not blow directly on his dick but still he had to remove one of his gloves to jerk off successfully, and sometimes the gloveless hand would get so cold that he would have to put that glove back on and switch to the other hand. He came on her grave many nights.



The old cemetery was six miles out of town on a little-used road that curved up into the woods and then zigzagged down the western side of the mountain, where it emptied into a superannuated truck route to Albany. The cemetery was set into an open hillside that rolled gently up to an ancient stand of hemlock and white pine. It was beautiful, still, aesthetically charming, melancholy perhaps, but not a cemetery that made you downhearted when you entered it—it was so charming that it sometimes looked as though it had nothing to do with death. It was old, very old, though there were some even older in the nearby hills, their eroded tombstones, fallen aslant, dating back to the earliest years of Colonial America. The first burial here—of a certain John Driscoll—had been in 1745; the last burial had been of Drenka, on the last day of November 1993.

Because of the seventeen snowstorms that winter it was often impossible for him to make his way up to the cemetery, even on nights when Roseanna had hurried off to an A.A. meeting in her four-wheel drive and he was all alone. But when the roads were plowed, the weather was good, the sun down, and Roseanna gone, he drove his Chevy up to the top of Battle Mountain and parked at the cleared entrance to a hiking path about a quarter mile east of the cemetery and made his way along the highway to the graveyard and then, using a flashlight as sparingly as he could, across the treacherous glaze of the drifted snow to her grave. He never drove out during the day, however much he needed to, for fear of running into one of her Matthews or, for that matter, anyone who could take to wondering why, at the coldest spot in the state's "icebox" county, in the midst of the worst winter in local history, the disgraced puppeteer was paying his respects to the remains of the innkeeper's peppy wife. At night he could do what he wished to do, unseen by anyone but his mother's ghost.

"What do you want? If you want to say something . . . " But his mother never did communicate with him, and just because she didn't he came dangerously close to believing that she was not a hallucination—if he was hallucinating, then easily enough he could hallucinate speech for her, enlarge her reality with a voice of the kind with which he used to enliven his puppets. These visitations had been going on too regularly to be a mental aberration . . . unless he was mentally aberrant and the unreality was going to worsen as life became even more unendurable. Without Drenka it *was* unendurable—he didn't have a life, except at the cemetery.

The first April after her death, on this early-spring night, Sabbath lay spread-eagled atop her grave, reminiscing with her about Christa. "Never forget you coming," he whispered into the dirt, "never forget you begging her, 'More, more. . . .' " Invoking Christa did not exacerbate his jealousy, remembering Drenka lying back in his arms while Christa maintained the steady pressure of the point of her tongue on Drenka's clitoris (for close to an hour—he'd timed them) only intensified the loss, even though, shortly after the three had first got together, Christa began taking Drenka to a bar in Spottsfield to dance. She went so far as to make Drenka the gift of a gold chain that she'd lifted from her former employer's jewelry drawer on the morning she'd decided she'd had enough of looking after a kid so hyperactive that he was about to be enrolled in a special school for the "gifted." She told Drenka that the value of *everything* she'd walked off with (including a pair of diamond stud earrings and a slithery little bracelet of diamonds) didn't come to half of what she was entitled to for having been stuck, sight unseen, with that kid.

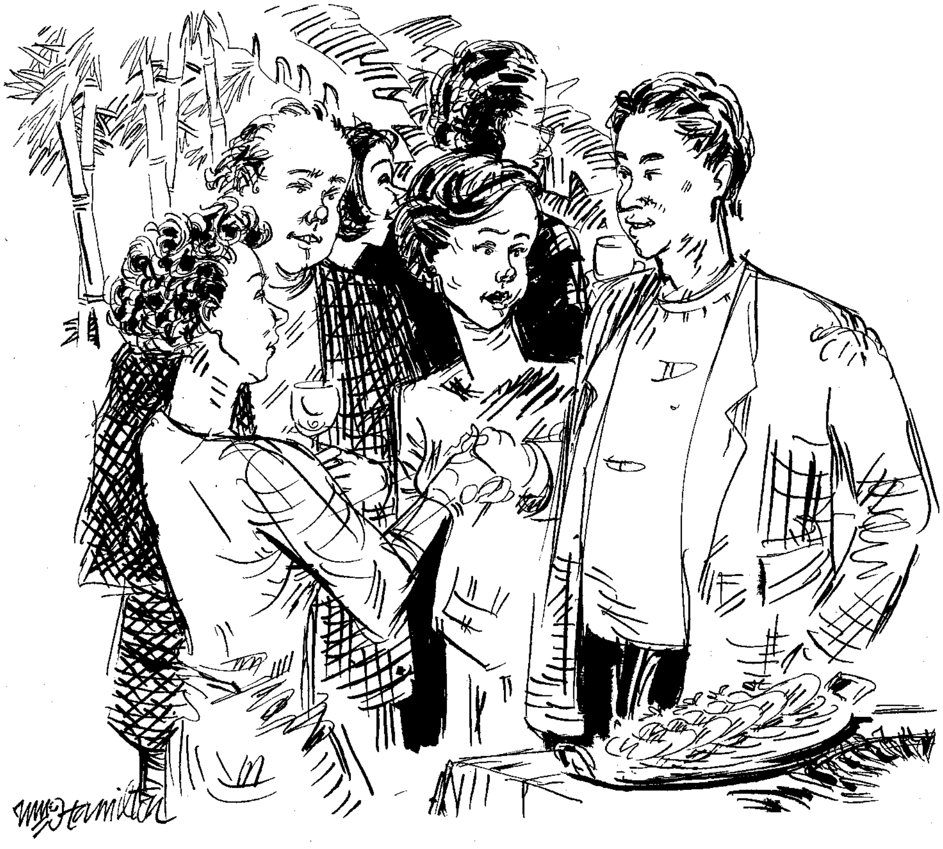
CHRISTA lived in an attic room on Town Street, overlooking the green, just above the gourmet-food shop where she worked. Her rent was free, lunches were free, and in addition she was paid twenty-five dollars a week For two months, on Wednesday nights Drenka and Sabbath would go, in separate cars, to lie with Christa in the attic. Nothing was open on Town Street after dark, and they could get up unobserved to Christa's by an outside back staircase. Three times Drenka had been by herself to see Christa there but, fearful that Sabbath would be angry with her if he knew, she did not tell him until a year after Christa had turned against the two of them and moved out to the countryside, into the rented farmhouse of a history instructor on the Athena faculty, a woman of thirty with whom Christa had begun a love affai even before she had undertaken he little caprice with the elderly. Abruptl she stopped answering Sabbath's phon calls, and when he ran into her on day—while he pretended to be studying the window display of the gourmet shop, a display that hadn't changed since Tip-Top Grocery Company had evolved in the late sixties into Tip-Top Gourmet Company to accommodate the ardor of the times—she said to him angrily, her mouth so minute it looked like something omitted from her face, "I don't want to talk to you anymore." "Why? What happened?" "You two exploited me." "I don't think that's true, Christa. To exploit someone means to use someone selfishly for one's own ends or to utilize them for profit. I don't think either of us exploited you any more than you exploited either of us." "You're an old man! I am twenty years old! I do not want to talk to you!" "Won't you at least talk to Drenka?" "Leave me alone! You're nothing but a fat old man!" "So was Falstaff, kiddo. So was that huge hill of flesh Sir John Paunch, sweet creator of bombast! 'That villainous abominable misleader of youth, Falstaff, that old white-bearded Satan'!—" but she was by this time already into the shop, leaving Sabbath to sadly contemplate—along with a Christaless future—two jars of Mi-Kee Chinese Duck Sauce, two jars of

Krinos Grape Leaves in Brine, two cans of La Victoria Refried Beans, and two cans of Baxter's Cream of Smoked Trout Soup, all of them encircling a bottle fancily wrapped in a sunfaded whitish paper shroud and positioned on a pedestal at the center of the window as if it were the answer to all our cravings, a bottle of Lea & Perrins Worcestershire Sauce. Yes, a relic much like Sabbath himself of what was considered oh-so-spicy in a bygone era less . . . in a bygone era more . . . in a bygone era when . . . in a bygone era whose . . . Idiot! The mistake was never to have given her money. The mistake was to have given Drenka the money instead. All he'd slipped Christa—and this only to get a foot in the door the first time—was thirty-five dollars for a quilt she'd made. He should have been slipping her that much per week. To have imagined that Christa was in it for the fun of making Drenka crazy, that Drenka's coming was for her remuneration enough—idiot! idiot!

Though Sabbath had masterminded the evening and given Drenka the money she had demanded to particiate, he'd found himself more or less superfluous from the moment Drenka knocked on the door and he let her into the attic room where he'd arrived early himself, thinking that it might be necessary, even after a month of delicate diplomacy, to continue negotiations right down to the wire. There was nothing small about this endeavor, and he was still not sure how reliable a person Christa was—she had not entirely cleansed herself in Madamaska Falls of her European suspicions, nor had Sabbath observed in her, as he hoped to, a single encouraging sign of the development of a more selfless point of view. "Drenka," he said when he opened the door to let her in, "this is my friend Christa," and though previously Drenka had seen Christa only through the window of the gourmet shop—strolled by a few times at Sabbath's suggestion—she walked directly across to where Christa was sitting on the secondhand couch in tight torn jeans and a sequinned velvet jacket a shade of violet matching her eyes. Sinking to her knees on the bare floorboards, Drenka grabbed Christa's close-cropped head between her two hands and kissed her strongly on the mouth. The speed with which Drenka unbuttoned Christa's jacket and with which Christa undid Drenka's silk blouse and cleared aside her push-up bra astonished Sabbath. But Drenka's boldness always astonished him. He had imagined a warmup would be required—talking and joking overseen by him, a heart-to-heart talk, maybe even a look through Christa's boring quilts to put the two of them at their ease—when, in fact, the five hundred dollars in Drenka's purse had emboldened her, in her words, "to just go in like a whore and do it."

Afterward Drenka couldn't say enough wonderful things about Christa. While Sabbath drove Drenka to where she'd parked behind Town Street, she snuggled adoringly into his side, kissing his beard, licking his neck—she, the woman of forty-eight, as excited as a child just home from the circus. "With a lesbian, there is a sense of *love* that I received from her. Such great experience she had in how to touch a woman's body. And the kissing! Her knowledge of the female body, how to caress it, how to kiss it, how to touch my skin and to make my nipples hard and to suck my nipples, and that loving, giving, very sexual way, very like a man, that kind of erotic vibration that she would deliver to me made me so very hot. To know exactly how to touch my body in a way almost *more* superior than sometimes men can know how to do it. To find on my cunt the little button, and to hold it there exactly the amount of time that was needed to make me come. And when she started kissing me—you know, going down and sucking me—the skill of the tongue pressure right on the right place . . . oh, that was very exciting."

Up on the bed, only inches away, following every movement like a medical student observing his first surgical procedure, he'd had a good time too and once even been able to be of assistance when Christa, her muscular tongue anchored between Drenka's thighs, went groping around the sheets searching blindly for a vibrator. Earlier on, she had removed three of them from the bedside table—ivory-colored vibrators ranging in length from three to six inches—and Sabbath was able to locate one for her, the longest of them, and to place it, correctly oriented, into her outstretched hand. "So, you didn't need me at all," he said. "Oh, no. I find it very wonderful and exciting to have another woman, but," said Drenka, lying, as it would later



"Chad is doing product placement on the Simpson trial."

turn out, "I wouldn't want to have to do it alone with her. It couldn't turn me on. I have to have the male penis there, the male excitement to urge me on. But I do find very erotic a young woman's body, the beauty of it, the round curves, the small breasts, the way she is shaped, and the smell of it, and the softness of it, and then as I come down myself to the cunt, I find the cunt actually quite beautiful. I never would have thought that, looking in the mirror. You come with your shame to look at yourself and you look at your sexual organs and they are not acceptable from the aesthetic perspective. But in this setting, I can see the whole thing, and although it is a mystique that I am a part of, it's a mystery to me, a total mystery."

METROPOLIS

These are my favorite museum rooms,
the out-of-the-way ones on the upper floors,
usually unpeopled except for a single guard
who appears and disappears in the maze of walls
where these minor American paintings are hung.

I like the calm rustic ones: a surface of lake,
the low bough of an oak like a long arm,
a blue smudge of distant hills,
anything with cows, especially if they are standing
in a stream, their large, vacuous faces
staring into the warm nineteenth-century afternoon.
And if one has lowered her head to drink,
and the painter has indicated with flecks of white
the water pouring down from the animal's mouth,
then the day, I feel, has achieved a modest crest.

And if it is raining outside that day,
and low clouds press down on city buildings
while people under umbrellas climb the marble steps,
I usually find myself in front of the still-lifes,
those painstaking devotions to objects,
agreeable possessions laid on the altar of a table.

I will examine the rim of a crystal pitcher,
the glint of candlelight on a silver spoon,
a curve of violin, the russet feathers of a grouse.

DRENKA'S grave was near the base of the hill about forty feet from a pre-Revolutionary stone wall and a row of enormous maples fencing off the cemetery from the blacktop that meandered over the mountain. In all these months, the headlights of maybe half a dozen rattling vehicles—pickup trucks from the sound of them—had flickered by while Sabbath grieved there over his loss. He had only to drop to his knees to be as invisible from the road as any of those buried around him, and often he was on his knees already. There had not yet been a single nighttime visitor to the cemetery other than himself—a remote rural graveyard eighteen-hundred feet above sea level did not strike people, even in springtime, as a place to come to roam around in after dark. Noises from beyond the cemetery—deer abounded on Battle Mountain—had seriously agitated Sabbath during his first months of visiting the grave, and he was often quite sure that at the edge of his vision there was something darting among the tombstones, something he believed was his mother.

In the beginning, he hadn't known that he was to become a regular visitor. But then he hadn't imagined that, looking down at the plot, he would see through to Drenka, see her inside the coffin raising her dress to the stimulating latitude at which the tops of her stockings were joined to the suspenders of her garter belt, once again see that flesh of hers that reminded him always of the layer of cream at the top of the milk bottle when he was a child and Borden delivered. It was stupid not to have figured on carnal thoughts. "Go down on me," she said to Sabbath. "Eat me the way Christa did," and Sabbath threw himself onto the grave, sobbing as he could not sob at the funeral.

Now that she was gone for good, it was incredible to Sabbath that not even when he was very much the crazy, cunt-struck lover, before Drenka became just an absorbing diversion there to have fun with, to fuck with, to plot and to scheme with, that not even back then had he thought to exchange the excruciating boredom of a drunk, de-eroticized Roseanna for marriage to someone whose affinity to him was unlike any woman's he had known outside a whorehouse. A conventional woman who would do anything. A respectable woman who was enough of a warrior to challenge his audacity with hers. There couldn't be a hundred such women in the entire country. Couldn't be fifty in all of America. And he'd had no idea. Never in thirteen years had he tired of looking down her blouse or looking up her skirt, and still he'd had no idea!

But now the thought undid him—n one would believe the scandalous tow polluter, swinish Sabbath, to be susceptible to such a flood of straightforwar feeling. He let go with a convulsive ardor that exceeded even her husband's on the icy November morning of the funeral. Young Matthew, wearing his trooper's uniform, betrayed no emotion other than hard-bitten rage mutely contained, the most violent of urges masterfully organized by a cop with a conscience. It was as though his mother had died not of a terrible disease but from an act of violence perpetrated by a psychopath he would go out and find and quietly take in, once the ceremony was over. Drenka had always wished that he could show the same admirable restrain as a son with his father that he did out on the road, where, to hear her tell it, he never got upset or lost control, whatever the provocation. Drenka ingenuously repeated to Sabbath, in Matthew's words, whatever Matthew boasted to her about himself. Her revelling in the boy's achievements was, to Sabbath, per-

I will put my glasses on and study
a group of pears, this curling page of music,
this flute, inkwell, or dinner bell,
these wooden matches beautifully strewn
upon a dark-green velvet cloth.

This is when I feel the tongs of the world
letting go of me, so I can float suspended
in the air around these glistening things
whose shadows will never lengthen
and whose weight no hand will ever feel.

You can have that bronze sculpture by the elevators:
"Revolution Holding the Head of Error
and Standing Over the Cadaver of Monarchy."
My place is here, leaning forward, wandering
through the microscopic, eyelash details of
"Still-Life with Herring, Wine, and Cheese,"
"Still-Life with Tobacco, Grapes, and a Pocket Watch,"
"Still-Life with Porcelain Vase, Silver Tray, and Glasses,"

or the one that always sends me out the door,
returns me, humming like a gyroscope,
to the rain and the madhouse outcries of the streets:
"Still-Life with Wild Strawberries in a Wan Li Bowl."

—BILLY COLLINS

haps not the most beguiling thing about her, but it was far and away the most innocent. You wouldn't have thought—if you were yourself a guileless ingénue—that such extreme polarity in any one person was possible, but Sabbath, a great fan of human inconsistency, was often transfixed by how worshipful his taboo-free, thrill-seeking Drenka could be of the son who saw the impeccable enforcement of the law as the most serious thing in life, who no longer had any friends but cops—who, he explained to her, had become totally mistrustful of people who *weren't* cops. When he was still fresh out of the academy, Matthew used to tell his mother, "You know something, I have more power than the President. You know why? I can take people's rights away. Their rights of freedom. 'You're under arrest. You're pinched. Your freedom is gone.' " And it was a sense of responsibility to all this power that caused Matthew so assiduously to toe the line. "He never gets upset," his mother told Sabbath. "If there's another cop who is mouthing off, calling the suspect a this or a that, Matthew tells him, 'It's not worth it. You're going to get yourself in trouble. We're doing what we're supposed to do.' Last week they brought a guy in, he was kicking the cruiser and everything, and Matthew said, 'Let him do what he's going to do, he's pinched. What are we going to prove by screaming at him and swearing at him? This is all stuff he can bring up in court. It's just another reason for this guy to get out of what he's done wrong.' Matthew says they can swear, they can do whatever they want—they've got handcuffs on, he's in control of the situation, not them. Matthew says, 'He's trying to get me to lose control. There are cops who do lose control. They start screaming at them—and why, Ma? For what?' Matthew is just quiet and takes them in."

FOR Madamaska Falls, the crowd at the funeral had been huge. Aside from friends from town and the many past and present employees of the inn, there were, up from New York, in from Providence and Portsmouth and Boston, dozens of guests to whom Drenka had been the gracious, energetic hostess over the years—and among the guests were a number of men she had fucked. In the face of each the haggard look of loss and sorrow was clearly visible to Sabbath, who chose to observe them from the rear of the crowd. Which was Edward? Which was Thomas? Which was Patrick? That very tall guy must be Scott. And not far from where Sabbath was standing, also back as far from the coffin as he could get, was Barrett, the new young electrician from Blackwall, the shabby town just to the north that was home to five tough taverns and a state mental hospital. Sabbath had happened to pull in behind Barrett's pickup down in the crowded cemetery lot—across the truck's tailgate were painted the words "Barrett Electric Co. 'We'll fix your shorts.' "

Barrett, who wore his hair in a ponytail and sported a Mexican mustache, stood beside his pregnant wife. She was holding a bundle that was their tiny baby, and weeping openly. Two mornings a week, when Mrs. Barrett drove down to the valley to her secretarial job with the insurance company, Drenka would drive up past the reservoir to Blackwall and take baths with Mrs. Barrett's husband. He didn't look at all well that day, maybe because his suit was tight or maybe because without a coat to wear he was freezing to death. He shifted from one long leg to the other constantly, as though at the conclusion of the service he was in danger of being lynched. Barrett was Drenka's latest catch from among the workers making repairs around the inn. Last catch. A year younger than her son. He rarely spoke except when the bath was over, and then, with his hick enthusiasm, he would delight Drenka by telling her, "You are somethin', you are really somethin' else." Aside from the youth and the youthful body, what excited Drenka was that he was "a physical man." "He is not unhandsome," she told Sabbath. "He has this animal thing that I like. He is like I have a twenty-four-hour fucking service if I want it. His muscles are strong and his stomach is completely flat, and then he has this big dick, and he sweats a lot, there is all this sweat coming out of him, he is all red in his face, and he is like you, he is also 'I don't want to come yet, Drenka, I don't want to come yet.' And then he says, 'Oh my God, I'm coming, I'm coming,' and then 'Ohhh. Ohhh,' those big sounds he makes. And the relief, it's like they collapse almost. And that he lives in a working-class environment and that I go there—all that adds to the excitement. A little apartment building with horrible horses on the walls. They have two rooms, and the taste is horrible. The other people there are attendants from the insane asylum. The bathroom has one of those old bathtubs that stand on the floor. And I say to him, 'Turn the bathtub on so I can take a bath.' I remember one time I came there at noon and I was very hungry and we were going to have a pizza. I undressed right away and I run to the bathtub. Yes, I think we get very hot in the bathtub, jerking him a little, you know. You can fuck in the bathtub, and we did, but then the water runs over. What I like is the *way* we are fucking, which is specific to him. He will sort of sit up and, because his prick is big, we sort of sit and fuck that way. We work very hard and there is a lot of sweating, a lot of physical movement, much more than I can think of with anyone else. I love to take baths *and* showers. Part of the excitement is the lathering. The soap. You start at the face and then the chest and the stomach and then you come down to the dick, and that gets big, or it is big already. And then you start to fuck. If you're standing in the shower, you stand up and fuck. Sometimes he will lift my legs up and he carries me like that in the shower. If it's in the bathtub, then I will tend to sit on top of him and fuck that way. Or I can bend over and he will fuck me. I love the bathtub, to fuck my stupid electrician there. I love it."

Her mistake was to take Barrett the bad news. "You told me," he said, "you promised me—you weren't going to complicate everything, and here you go. I've got a baby to support, I've got a pregnant wife to look after. I got a new business to worry about, and one thing I don't need right now, from you, me, or anybody, is cancer."

Drenka phoned Sabbath and drove immediately to meet him at the Grotto. "You should never have told him," Sabbath said, seated on the granite outcropping and rocking her in his lap. "But," she said, crying pitifully, "we're lovers—I wanted him to know. I didn't know he was this *shit.*" "Well, if you'd looked at it from the point of view of the pregnant wife, that might have occurred to you. You knew he was stupid. You liked that he was stupid. 'My stupid electrician.' It turned you on that he had this animal thing, lived in a horrible place, was stupid." "But I was talking to him about *cancer.* Even a *stupid* person—" "Shhh. Shhh. Not one apparently, as stupid as Barrett."

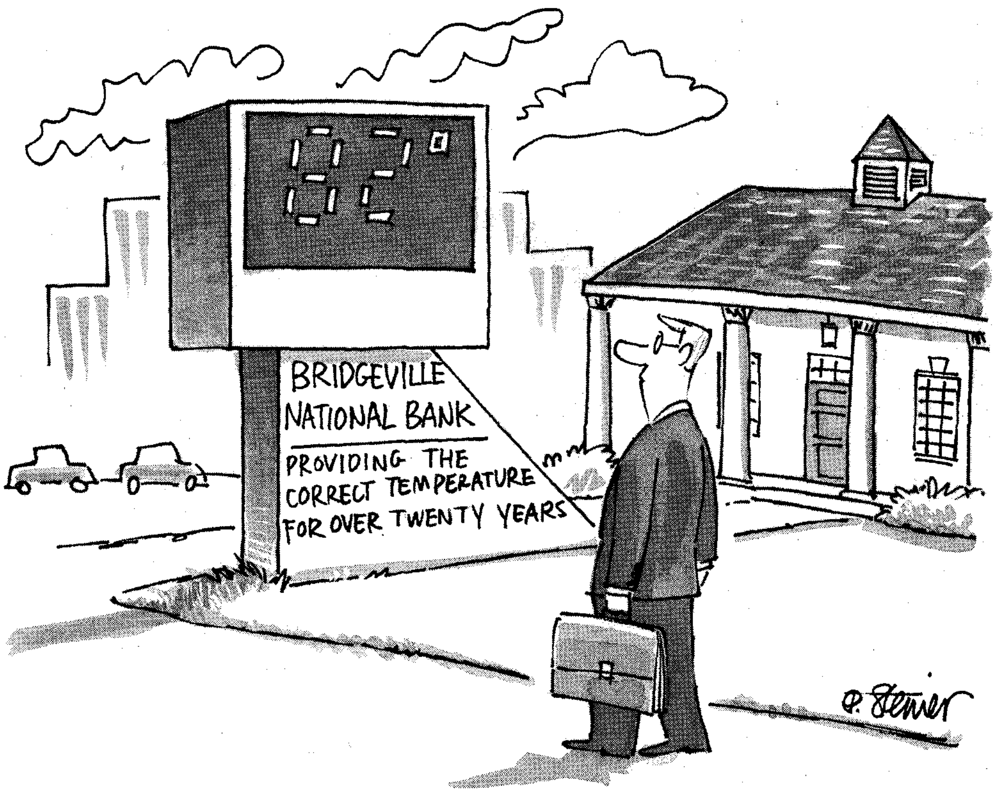
SABBATH was completing his mourning—by scattering his seed across Drenka's oblong patch of Mothe Earth—when the headlights of a ca turned off the blacktop and in to th wide gravel drive where the hearse ordinarily entered the cemetery. Th headlights advanced waveringly an then they were out and the quiet engin went dead. Zipping up his trousers Sabbath scurried, bent over, toward th nearest maple tree. There, on his knees he hid his white beard between th massive tree trunk and the old ston wall. He could discern from the silhouette of the car—more or less the shap and the size of a hearse—that it was limousine. And a figure was marchin steadily up in the direction of Drenka grave, tall, in a large overcoat, an wearing what looked to be high boot He was guiding himself by the beam a flashlight that he kept switching and off. In the hazy half-dark of t moonlit cemetery he looked giganti bounding forward on those boots. H must have been expecting cold weathe up here. He must be from—it was th credit-card magnate! It wa Scott!

Six feet five inches tall. Scot Lewis. Five-foot-two Drenka had smiled up at him in an elevator in Boston and asked if he knew the correct time. It took only that. She used to sit on his dick in the back seat of the limo while the driver took a slow tour of the suburbs, driving sometimes past Lewis's own house. Scott Lewis was one of those men who told Drenka that there was no other woman like her in the world. Sabbath had heard him say it from the telephone of the limousine.

"He is very interested in my body," she reported promptly to Sabbath. "He wants to take photographs and he wants to look at me and he wants to kiss me all the time. He is a big cunt licker—and very tender." Yet, tender fellow that he was, the

"Are we interested in exploring the healing wisdom of an ancient culture?"

second evening she rendezvoused with him at a Boston hotel, a call girl Lewis had ordered came knocking at their door only ten minutes after Drenka's arrival. 'What I didn't like about it," Drenka told Sabbath on the phone the next morning, "was hat I didn't have a say in it, that t was just put upon me." "So what did you do about it?" "I just had to make the best of it, Mickey. She comes to the hotel room dressed like an upper-class whore. She pulls open her bag and she has all these things in here. Do you want a little maid's uniform? Do you want it Indian tyle? And then she takes out her dildos and she says, 'Do you like his or that?' And then, O.K., now you start. But how do you get aroused by that? That was kind of hard even for me. Anyway, I guess we sort of got tarted. The idea was that the uy was more the voyeur. Interested in seeing how two women do it. He asked her mostly to go down on e. It all seemed to me so technical and cold, but I decided, O.K., I'm going to be game for it. So eventually I did some work and I was able to get xcited by it. But finally I fucked more Lewis—we two were fucking while she was just sort of in the picture somewhere. After he came, I started kissing her pussy, but it was very dry, though after a while she started moving a little bit and that then became sort of my mission. Could I make a whore hot? I think maybe I did to some extent, but it was hard to know if she wasn't just playing it. You know what she said to *me*? To me? She says, when we're all getting dressed, 'You're very hard to make come!' She was *angry*. 'The husbands want me to do this all the time'—she thought we were husband and wife—'but you took unusually hard work.' Husbands and wives are very common, Mickey. The whore said that's what she does all the time." "That's difficult for you to believe?" he asked. "You mean," she replied, laughing happily, "everybody is crazy like us?" "Crazier," Sabbath assured her, "much, much crazier."


BRIDGEVILLE
NATIONAL BANK
PROVIDING THE CORRECT TEMPERATURE FOR OVER TWENTY YEARS
P. Steiner

Drenka called Lewis's erection "the rainbow" because, as she liked to explain, "his dick is rather long and sort of curved. And there is a little bend to it, to one side." On Sabbath's instruction she had traced its outline on a piece of paper—Sabbath still had the drawing somewhere, probably in among those dirty pictures of her that he had not been able to look at since her death. Lewis was the only one of her men other than Sabbath whom she had allowed to fuck her in the ass. He was that special. When Lewis had wanted to do it to the whore as well, the whore said sorry, that was where she drew the line.

Oh yes, the jolly time Drenka had with this guy's crooked dick! Infuriating! And yet, back when it was happening, Sabbath had frequently had to slow her down while she was telling him her stories, had to remind her that nothing was too trivial to recount, no detail too minute to bring to his attention. He used to solicit this kind of talk from her, and she obeyed. Exciting to them both. His genital mate. His greatest pupil.

It had, however, taken him years to make Drenka a decent narrator of her adventures, since her inclination, in English at least, was to pile truncated sentences one on the other until he couldn't understand what she was talking about. But gradually, as she listened to him and talked to him, there was an ever-increasing correlation between all she was thinking and what she said. She certainly became syntactically more urbane than nine-tenths of the locals up on their mountain, even though her accent remained to the end remarkably juicy: "chave" for "have," "cheart" for "heart"; at the conclusion of "stranger" and "danger," a strong rolling "r"; and her "l"s almost like a Russian's, emerging from a long way back in the mouth. The effect was of a delightful shadow cast on her words, making just a little mysterious the least mysterious utterance—phonetic seduction enthralling Sabbath all the more.

She was weakest at retaining idiomatic English but managed, right up to her death, to display a knack for turning the clichéd phrase, proverb, or platitude into an objet trouvé so entirely her own that Sabbath wouldn't have dreamed of intervening—indeed, some (such as "It takes two to tangle") he wound up adopting. Remembering the confidence with which she believed herself to be smoothly idiomatic, lovingly recalling from over all the years as many as he could of Drenka's malapropisms stripped him now of every defense, and once again he descended to the very pit of his sorrow: Bear and grin it . . . His days are counted . . . A roof under my head . . . When the shithouse hit the fan . . . You can't compare apples and apples . . . The boy who cried "Woof!" . . . Easy as a log . . . Alive and cooking . . . You're pulling my leg out . . . I've got to get quacking . . . Talk for yourself, Johnny . . . A closed and shut case . . . Don't keep me in suspension . . . Beating a dead whore . . . A little salt goes a long way . . . He thinks I'm a bottomless piss . . . Let him eat his own medicine . . . The early bird is never late . . . His bark is worse than your cry . . . It took me for a loop . . . It's like bringing coals to the fireplace . . . I feel as though I've been run over by a ringer . . . I have a bone to grind with you . . . Crime doesn't pay off . . . You can't teach an old dog to sit. . . . When she wanted Matija's dog to stop and wait at her side, instead of saying "Heel!" Drenka called out, "Foot!" And once when Drenka came up to Brick Furnace Road to spend an afternoon in the Sabbaths' bedroom—Roseanna was visiting her sister in Cambridge—though it was raining only lightly when she arrived, by the time they had eaten the sandwiches Sabbath had prepared and had smoked a joint and got into bed, the day had all but turned into a moonless night. An eerie black hour of silence passed and then the storm broke over their mountain—on the radio Sabbath later learned that a tornado had torn apart a trailer park only fifteen miles west of Madamaska Falls. When the turbulence overhead was most noisily dramatic, hammering down like artillery that had found its target in Sabbath's property, Drenka, clinging to him beneath the sheet, said to Sabbath in a woozy voice, "I hope there is a thunder catcher on this house." "I am the thunder catcher on this house," he assured her.

When Sabbath saw Lewis bending over the grave to place a bouquet on the plot, he thought, But she's mine! She belongs to me!

What Lewis did next was such an abomination that Sabbath reached crazily about in the dark for a rock or a stick with which to rush forth and beat the son of a bitch over the head. Lewis unzipped his fly and from his shorts extracted the erection whose outlined drawing Sabbath had retained in his files, he now remembered, under "Misc." He was a long time rocking back and forth, rocking and moaning, until at last he turned his face upward to the starry sky and a full, fervent basso profundo echoed across the hills. "Suck it, Drenka, suck me dry!"

Though it was not phosphorescent, enabling Sabbath visually to chart its course, though it was not sufficiently clotted or dense for him to hear it splatter to the ground even in that mountaintop silence, simply from the stillness of Lewis's silhouette and from the fact that his breathing was audible thirty feet away, Sabbath knew that the tall lover had just commingled his wad with the short one's. In the next moment Lewis had fallen to his knees and, before her grave, in a low tearful voice he was lovingly reciting, ". . . tits . . . tits . . . tits . . . tits . . ."

Sabbath could endure only so much. A rock he'd kicked out from between the large, protuberant roots of the maple, a rock as big around as a bar of soap, he picked up and hurled in the direction of Drenka's grave. It clanged against a tombstone nearby, causing Lewis to leap to his feet and look frantically about. Then he ran down the hill to the waiting limo, whose engine immediately started up. The car backed out of the drive and into the road, and only then did the headlights come on and the limousine whizz away.

When he rushed across to Drenka's grave, Sabbath saw that Lewis's bouquet was huge, containing perhaps as many as four dozen flowers. The only ones he could recognize, with the aid of his flashlight, were the roses and the carnations. He didn't know any of the others by name, despite all those summers of Drenka's tutoring. Kneeling down, he gathered up the bouquet by its bulky bundle of stems and clutched it to his chest as he started along the dirt path toward the highway and his car. At first he imagined that the bouquet was wet from the shop, where the flowers would have been kept fresh in vases of water, but soon the texture made him understand what, of course, the wet substance was. The flowers were drenched with it. His hands were covered with it. So was the chest of the dirty old hunting jacket with the enormous pockets in which he used to carry puppets down to the college before the scandal with Kathy Goolsbee.

Drenka had once told Sabbath that after her marriage, when, in their first year as émigrés, Matija grew depressed and lost all interest in fucking her, she was so desolated that she went to a doctor in Toronto, where they lived briefly after fleeing Yugoslavia, and asked hin how many times a husband was supposed to do it with a wife. The docto asked her what she thought a reasonabl expectation might be. Without eve stopping to think, the young bride replied, "Oh, about four times a day." Th doctor asked where a working coupl was to find the time that would tak other perhaps than on the weekend. Sh explained, her fingers doing the calculating, "You do it once about three i the morning when sometimes yo hardly know you do it. You do it a seven when you wake up. You do when you come home from work an before you sleep. You can even do it tw times before you go to sleep."

Why this story had come to him he cautiously descended the dark cemetery hill—the bespattered flowers sti clutched in his hands—was because that triumphant Friday, when she ha ended the day—not the week, the day—awash with the sperm of four men. "N body can accuse you, Drenka, of bei timid in the face of your fantasies. Fou he said. "Well, I'd be honored to numbered among them should the ever be a next time." He found, on hea ing this story, not merely his desir inflamed but his veneration, too—ther was something great about it: somethin heroic. This shortish woman a little o the plump side, darkly pretty but wit an oddly damaged-looking nose, thi refugee who knew hardly anything o the world beyond her schoolgirl Spli (pop. 99,462) and the picturesque New England village of Madamaska Falls (pop. 1,109), seemed to Sabbath *a woman of serious importance.*

WHEN Sabbath reached his car, he walked beyond it some twenty feet along the hiking trail into the woods and there he hurled the bouquet into the dark mass of the trees. Then he did something strange, strange even for a strange man like him, who believed himself inured to the limitless contradictions that enshroud us in life. Because of his strangeness most people couldn't stand him. Imagine then if someone had happened upon him that night, in the woods a quarter mile down from the cemetery, licking from his fingers Lewis's sperm and, beneath the full moon, chanting aloud, "I am Drenka! I am Drenka!" ♦

(*This is the second of two parts.*)

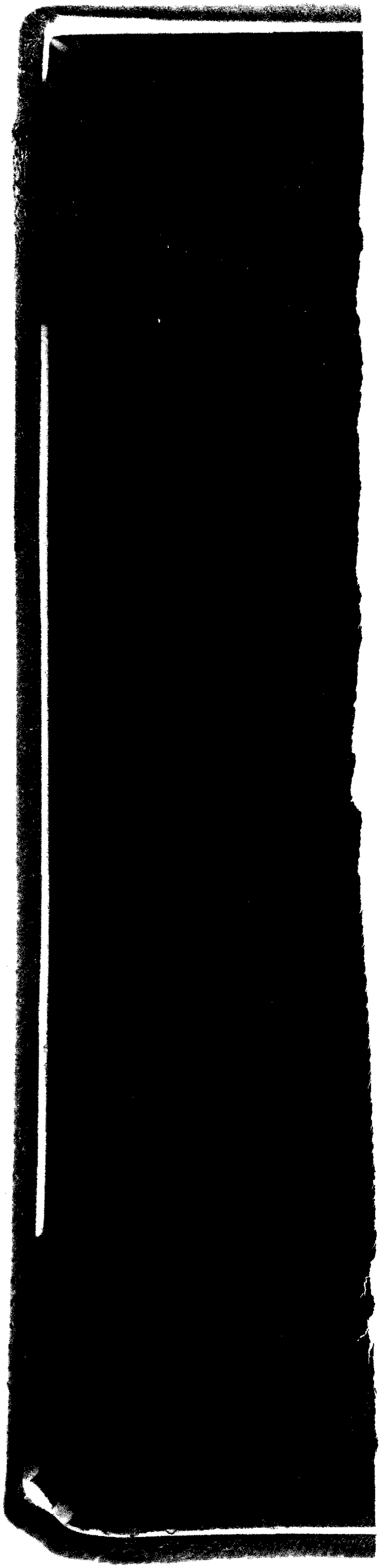
Mike Smith: A military brat with a liberal education.

AN AMERICAN ATTITUDE

Who are today's bikers? The only way for the photographer Sandro Miller to know for sure was to follow them to the quiet town of Sturgis, South Dakota, which is deafened every summer by the sound of thousands of men on Harleys.

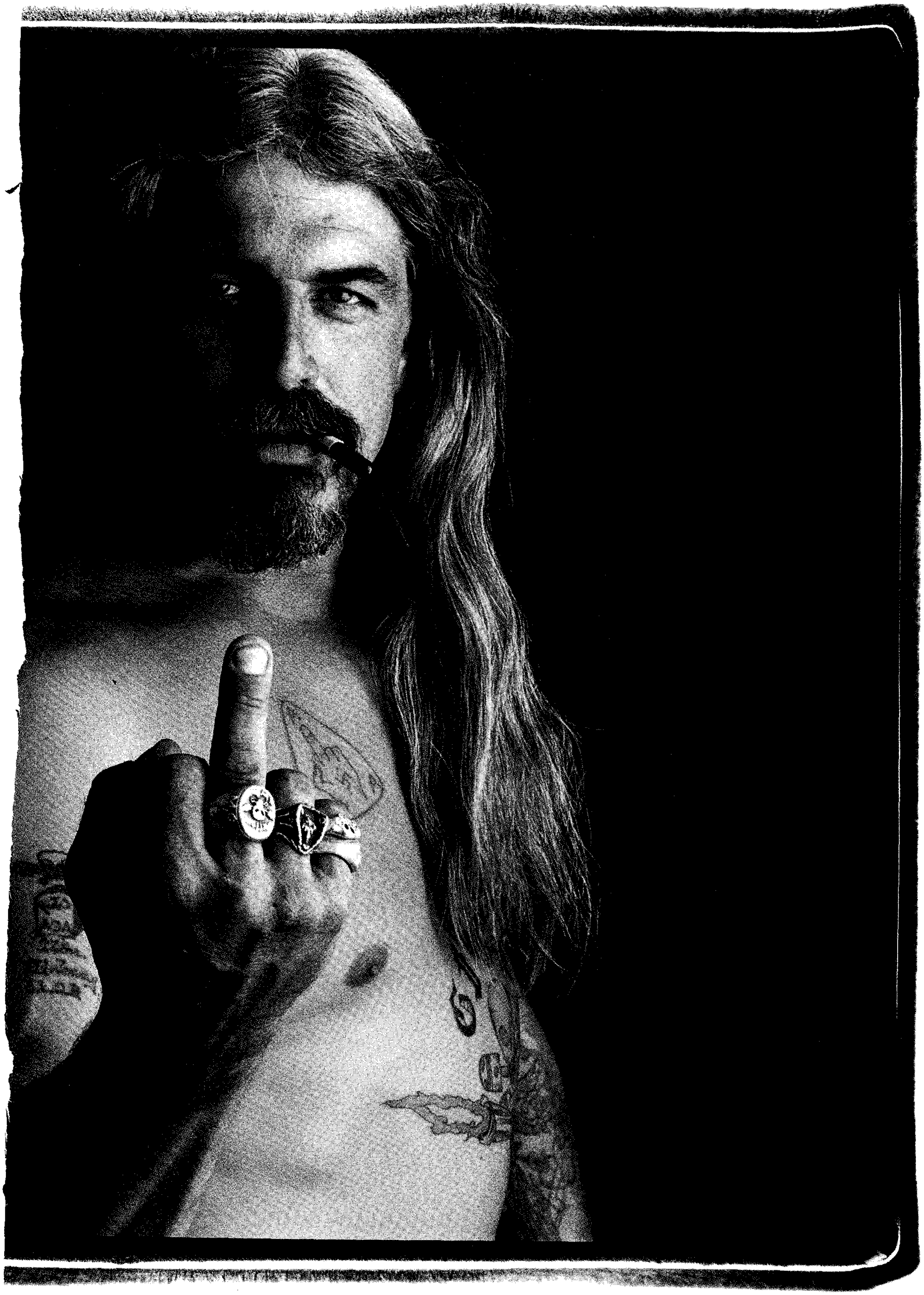
BY ALEC WILKINSON

You can't just buy a motorcycle and announce that from now on you will answer only when addressed as "Cowboy," and wear black leather chaps and a vest, and spangle the vest with patches and pins commemorating your branch of the service and some friends who died and some rallies you've been to, and get yourself a girlfriend who dances for dollar bills in a G-string at a titty bar and has a tattoo of a snarling tiger on her butt, and call yourself a biker. Bikers ride Harley-Davidson motorcycles. If you ride a Harley, you are a member of the brotherhood, and if you don't you are not. Q.E.D. Some bikers will not even apply the brakes to help a person whose motorcycle has broken down by the side of the road if the bike is not a Harley. If you were dumb enough to buy another brand of motorcycle, Cowboy, you can fix it yourself or walk. Listen to the lonesome, jangly little sound made by the stirrups they sold you at the motorcycle boutique.

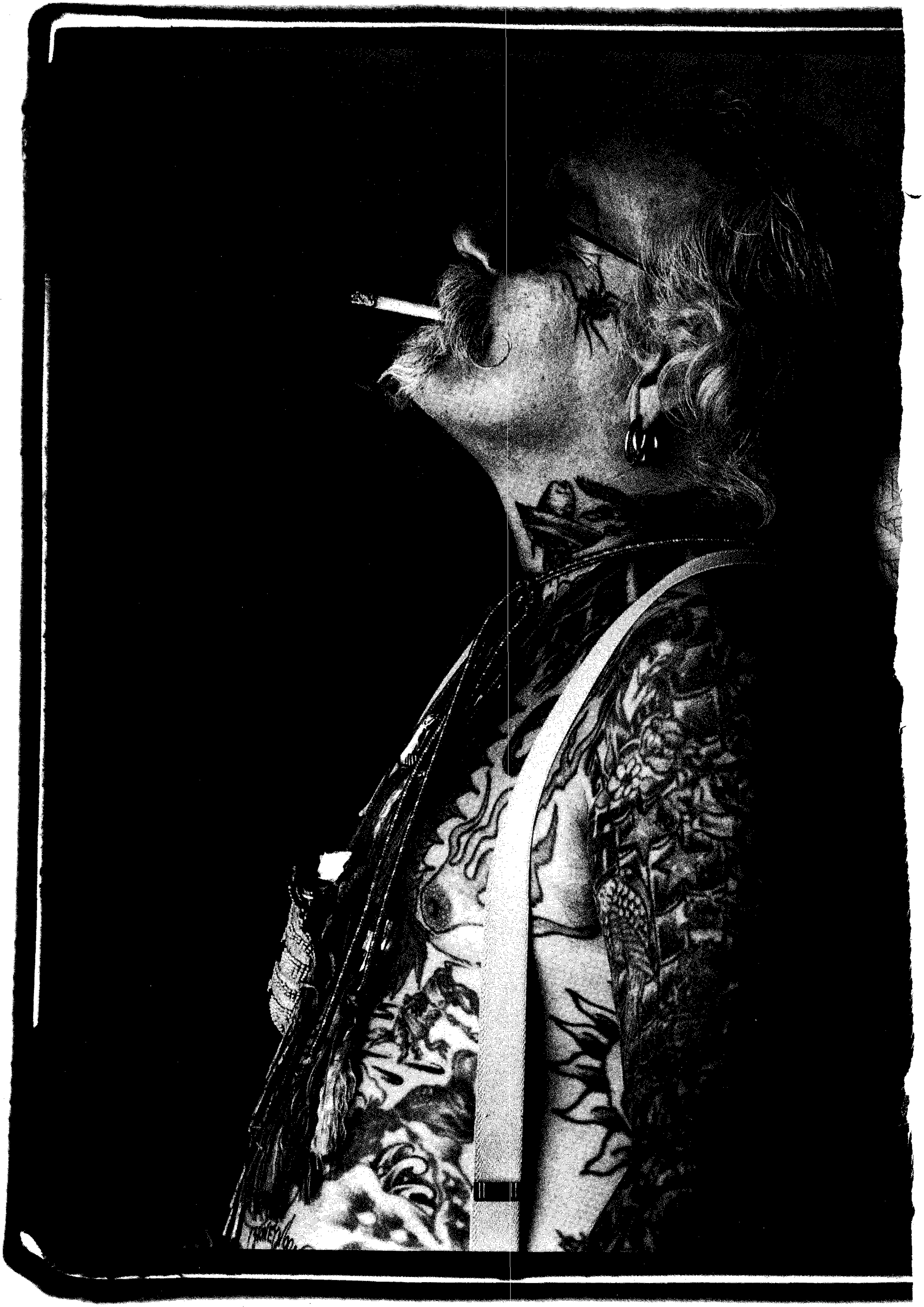


What accounts for the intensity of bikers' feelings about Harley-Davidsons is patriotism. Harley-Davidsons are the preëminent motorcycles made in America. "It's an attitude and ego thing," according to a biker I know. "If you're an American, you have an attitude, and if you have an ego you don't want to be seen riding foreign junk." In addition to being an attitude and ego thing, it's a style thing. The makers of foreign motorcycles emphasize sleekness, quiet, and speed. Bikers like big, loud, lumbering bikes. "Hogs—that is, Harleys, especially old Harleys—are fat, wide, and difficult to handle," the biker says. "They're called hogs because it's like trying to drive while you're sitting on the back of a hog." Bikers favor loud motorcycles partly for the sake of vanity, partly because they annoy everyone else, and partly for practical reasons. Bikers have a saying, "Loud pipes save lives," by which they mean that a biker whose motorcycle can be heard is less likely to be run down by a stockbroker in a Mercedes with the windows up and the radio on. Finally, bikers have nothing against speed, but getting from one place to another as fast as possible doesn't matter much to them. They like to bounce along and beat hell out of their kidneys and take in the scenery, then float down a river of beer or Jack Daniel's to quell the vibration of the road.

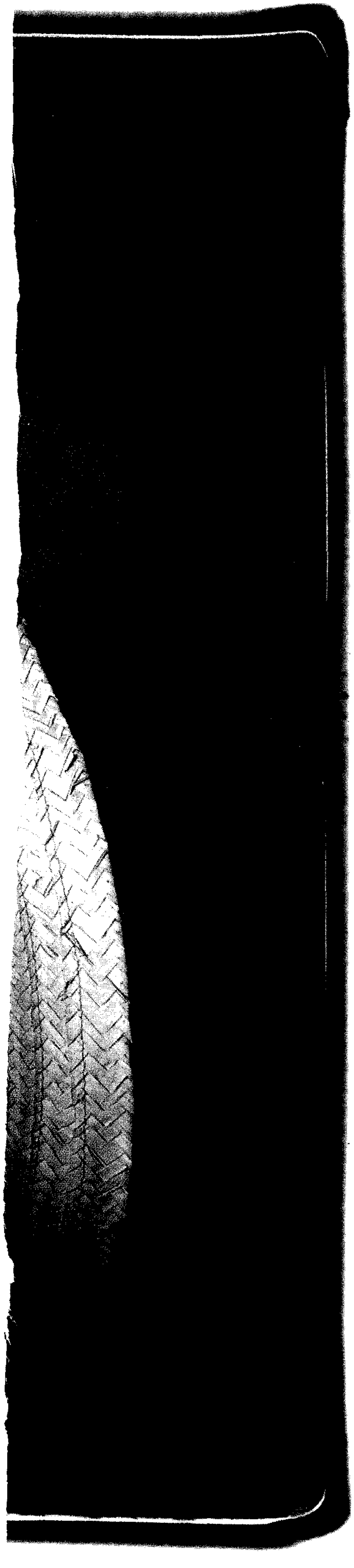
Bikers are especially contemptuous of Japanese motorcycles. They call them crotch rockets and rice burners. "Two things you don't want to get caught doing," a biker told me. "Riding Japanese metal and riding bitch"—meaning as a passenger. When a biker sees another biker riding as a passenger, he may say



Rick Cross (left): To get married or to ride? Gangster (above): His gang is called the Outlaws.

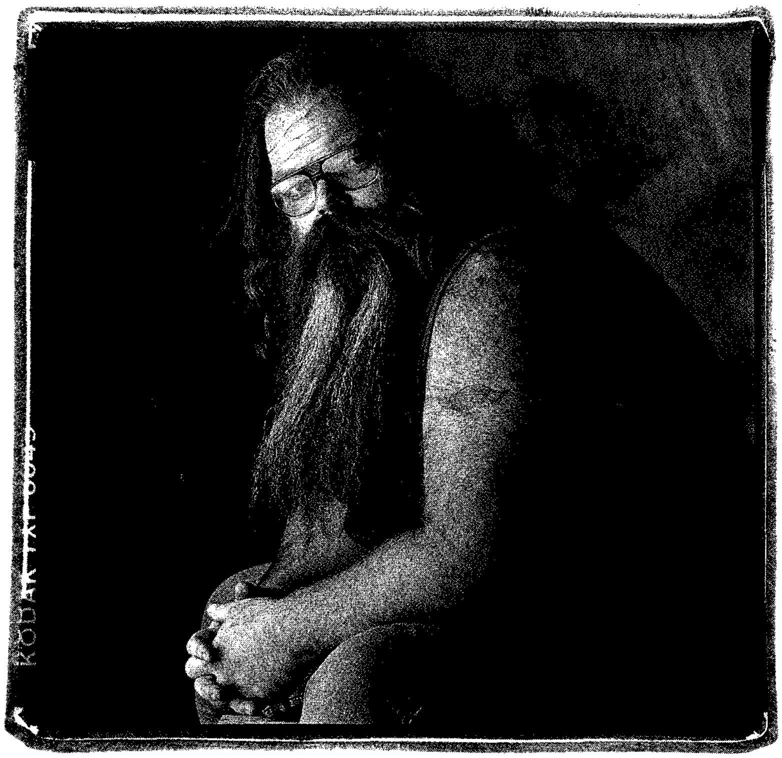


Crow (above): Nothing in life really matters except whiskey. Tim Koontz (right): A onetime Mormon scholarship studen



later to the driver, "Saw your new girlfriend the other day. You ought to tell her she needs a shave."

THE bikers whose images appear on these pages are Rick Cross, Tim Koontz, Mike Smith, a man who told Sandro Miller (who took the pictures) that his name was Crow, and one who told Miller that his name was Gangster. Crow is the man with the sombrero. Gangster is the man with his finger extended toward the camera's lens. He is a member of the Outlaws, a motorcycle gang in the South and Midwest. None of the four other bikers belong to a gang. Miller saw Crow in 1991 at a motorcycle rally in Daytona Beach. Crow asked for whiskey in exchange for having his picture taken. Nothing in life really mattered to him, he said, except whiskey. Miller had beer. They agreed that the next time they saw each other Miller would buy whiskey, but Miller never saw him again. Crow said that the tears on his cheek were drawn in memory of someone he loved who had died. The spider, he said, was just a spider.



The pictures of the other men were taken in Sturgis, South Dakota, during the summer of 1990. Each August, Sturgis holds a motorcycle rally called the Sturgis Rally and Races; 1990 was its fiftieth anniversary. Three hundred thousand people showed up; fifty-five hundred people live in Sturgis, which is about thirty-five miles east of Wyoming. Many townspeople make the bulk of their living during the rally. Merchants sell gasoline and food and souvenir T-shirts and wagonloads of liquor and beer. Regular taxpayers divide their lawns into plots large enough to contain concession stands, and lease the plots to venders. A desirable plot costs around two thousand dollars.

Sandro Miller began taking pictures of bikers in Chicago, where he is from, in 1989. The people he photographed told him that if he really wanted to know what being a biker was about he would have to go to Sturgis. During the rally, Miller took approximately a hundred and seventy portraits. (Since then, he has done about a hundred and fifty more.) Bikers are prone to calamity, they are likely to die in accidents or fights, they tend to drink more than is good for them, and many have been soldiers and struggle with the difficulties of returning from a war. A common tattoo to find among them is one of Jesus weeping. Often, Miller tells them that he is trying to record something fleeting in their expressions. Not infrequently, they say, "You mean like I lost someone?"

Mike Smith is the man with the

goggles. "I'm forty now, and I've been riding a bike—oh, Lord—since I'm about thirteen," he says. "We lived in Arkansas then, but we'd lived in Japan just before that. My father was in the Air Force, and had met old man Honda. The company made quite a little street bike at the time, and when my father went back to Japan for some flying hours I asked him to get me one. He brought home a bunch of boxes labelled 'Medical Supplies,' and I thought he hadn't brought back nothing, but I opened the boxes and there was all the parts, and, with him helping me, I put it together in a couple of days."

Smith lives on forty acres in central Oklahoma and works as a carpenter. On the back of his property he also has a paint-and-body-repair shop. He owns seven dogs and thirteen box turtles. In the winter, the box turtles live in the house, and in the summer he pens them in the yard.

RICK CROSS is the man with the mirrored glasses. He lives in a four-bedroom house with three other bikers in Simi Valley, California, just northwest of Los Angeles. He is six feet two inches tall and weighs two hundred and twenty pounds. When Miller took his picture, Cross weighed two sixty. Since then, he has had two operations on his back. The first operation removed part of a disk he had ruptured while lifting a crate, and the second operation removed the rest of the disk after he was thrown from bed during the Los Angeles earthquake and landed on his back on the floor. His doctor has told him that if he hurts his back again his spine may need to be fused, and that would leave him unable to bend except from his waist. He would probably no longer be able to tie his shoes. To prepare for this possibility, he has bought a pair of cowboy boots.

The tattoos on Cross's arms intentionally end several inches above his wrists so that he can conceal them with the sleeves of his shirt if he happens to apply for a job at a place that might have a prejudice against bikers or people adorned with what bikers call ink. A few years ago, he considered getting married. "She told me, 'You won't be riding your motorcycle after we're married,' " he says, "and I said to myself, 'Let me rethink this.' " A girlfriend once gave him an expensive Japanese motorcycle as a gift, and he gave it away.

THE address that Sandro Miller gave me for Tim Koontz was in Utah, on a street in a town near Salt Lake City. He no longer lived there. I began calling dealers of motorcycle parts in Salt Lake City and describing Koontz. When I called Caesar's Motorcycle Empire, Caesar told me that the description sounded familiar. I took him Koontz's picture. A man in the shop looked over his shoulder as he was studying it, and said, "I've seen that guy around. He's a really big guy. You just used to see him mainly by himself. He doesn't go to the biker bars. I remember his arms were like the neck on a horse." Caesar found someone who knew the man that Koontz worked for as a diesel mechanic at the Utah Transit Authority, and later that afternoon the phone in my hotel room rang and a man said, "My name is Tim."

When I got to his house, which was out on the edge of the city by a copper mine, he showed me the frame of his motorcycle. He had just had it repainted and was keeping it wrapped in a sheet in his bedroom. "You don't want the paint to get cold until you're sure it's dry," he said. Then we went out to his garage, where he had the rest of his motorcycle, in cardboard boxes. The winter, he said, when it was too cold to ride, was teardown time; in addition to painting, he was replacing parts of the engine. We sat on a bench and drank beer and looked out the open garage door at his driveway and some tree limbs and the house across the street. He said that his father had been an engineer and had worked all around the country, mainly on nuclear projects, including Three Mile Island, and had moved his family from one job to another in a succession of states. He said that he considered home to be Idaho Falls, where he spent part of his childhood. About twelve years ago, he and a partner owned a bar there called Murphy's Roadhouse. "We named it after a friend who had just barely got out of town on his way to Sturgis when a guy in a car head-on'd him," Koontz said. The Harley-Davidson trademark tattooed on Koontz's arm is a remnant of the bar. "A guy came through town who was tattooing," Koontz said. "Murphy's was the biker bar, and he hit the place wanting to know if anyone needed tattoos. He set up in a garage and sat there two solid days and didn't hardly sleep, and when it was over he had enough money to split."

Koontz grew up as a Mormon but has lapsed in his faith. His parents encouraged him to attend a Mormon college, in the hope that it would draw him closer to the church. "I've been this big since I was fourteen," he said. "In high school, I was the state wrestling champion in the heavyweight division. I thought about enlisting in the service but I was three hundred pounds, and I didn't know if they'd take me. The recruiter said, 'Well, you lie a little, and I'll lie a little, and we'll take care of it,' and that kind of soured me on the idea. I had scholarships for wrestling from ever school in Utah, but I ended up going t a Mormon school called Ricks College in Rexburg, Idaho. My first year wrestling, I blew out my knee, and that ruined my college career. It happened th week before finals, so I was in the hospital when they gave exams, and onl one of my teachers would let me make it up. The rest of them failed me, an that meant that I couldn't wrestle, an that meant that I couldn't get money to go to school. I never knew why they did that, but it turned me finally against the Mormon Church. That's when I wen to Idaho Falls and bought the bar."

Occasionally, the Mormons hold a conference in Salt Lake City, which is broadcast on local television. When the conference appears to be drawing to its close, Koontz gets on his bike and heads for the city. On the left-hand side of his gas tank is a painting of a naked brown-haired girl sitting on a beach with waves in the background, and on the right-hand side is a painting of a naked blonde. "They were done by a guy in Idaho Falls who was a canvas artist," Koontz says. "This was the first metal he ever did. I kept asking him if he would do it, and he was reluctant, and finally I went over to his house around two in the morning, woke him up, and said, 'Are you going to paint this or aren't you?' " As the faithful leave the tabernacle, Koontz rides among them. Mothers draw their daughters close. Fathers shield the eyes of their sons. Koontz likes to imagine one of them saying, "Don't look at that, boy, it'll burn your soul." ♦

BOOKS

THE RED-HOT TRANSCENDENTALIST

Ralph Waldo Emerson's aura of sobriety is punctured at last.

BY EDWARD HIRSCH

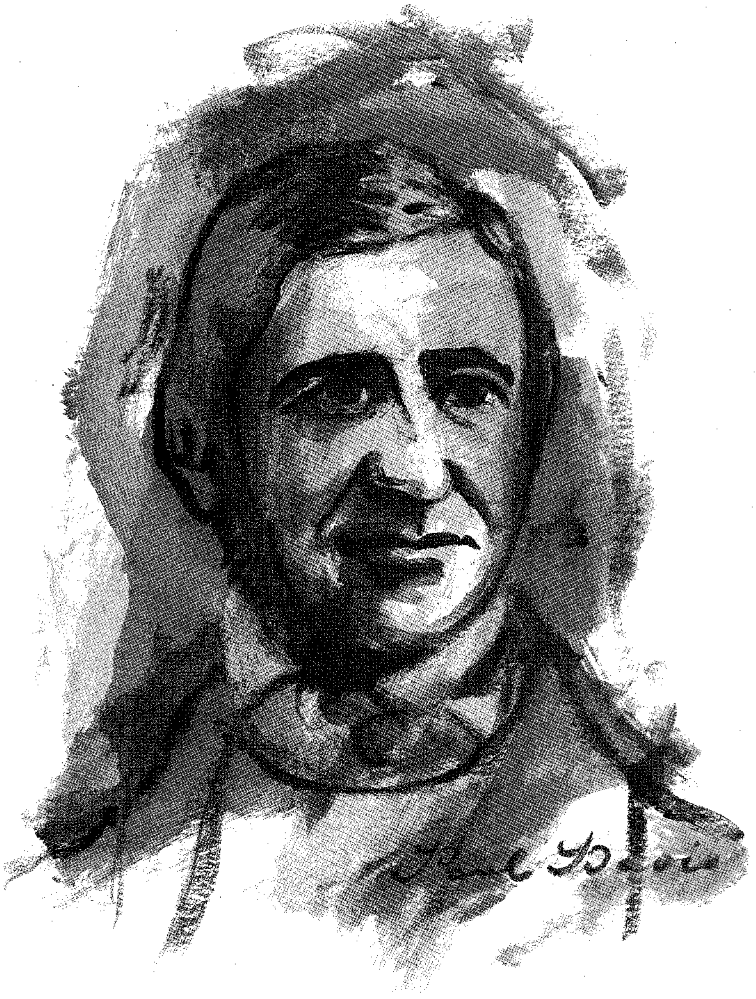
I NEVER was on a coach that went fast enough for me," Ralph Waldo Emerson once confessed, and, indeed, there is a wild, nervy, nearly out-of-ontrol quality to his best writing. He was passionate intellectual explorer setting forth for the unknown and flinging himelf into the wilderness of experience. His ssays are a clarion call for movement, action, transport. He held nothing back. One of his key words was "contact"; another was "abandonment." He abhorred stasis, and could never rest or stay still for long. Power ceases in the instant f repose," he wrote in his manifesto "Self-Reliance." t resides in the movement of transition from a past to a new state, in the hooting of the gulf, in the larting to an aim." He was a remarkably fluid thinker, a philosopher of "fluxions and mobility" ("Everything good is on the highway"), and one of our most volatile writers. He can also seem maddeningly elusive. "Every thing teaches transition, transference, metamorphosis: therein is human power," he declared in his journals. "We dive & reappear in new places."

Emerson's passionate nature has often been underestimated, and it has proved especially difficult to bring together his inner and outer lives. Who was this unsettled and unsettling thinker who said, "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds"? It's as unproductive to deify him as a plaster sage or "some new kind of saint—perhaps Unitarian" (W. C. Brownell) as to condescend to him as a "champion of cheerfulness" (George Santayana). Despite difficulties, admirable biographical efforts have been made in the past—by Ralph L. Rusk (1949), Gay Wilson Allen (1981), and John McAleer (1984), among others—but Robert D. Richardson, Jr.,'s splendid "Emerson: The Mind on Fire" (California; $35) is the first biography that locates the source of Emerson's volcanic power in his emotional depth and searing intellectual intensity. "Emerson really had passion; he wrote it," Gertrude Stein perceived, and Richardson presses home the point by exploring this side of Emerson's character. The result is a suggestive and sympathetic work that gets to the heart of the man who felt that "life is an ecstasy."

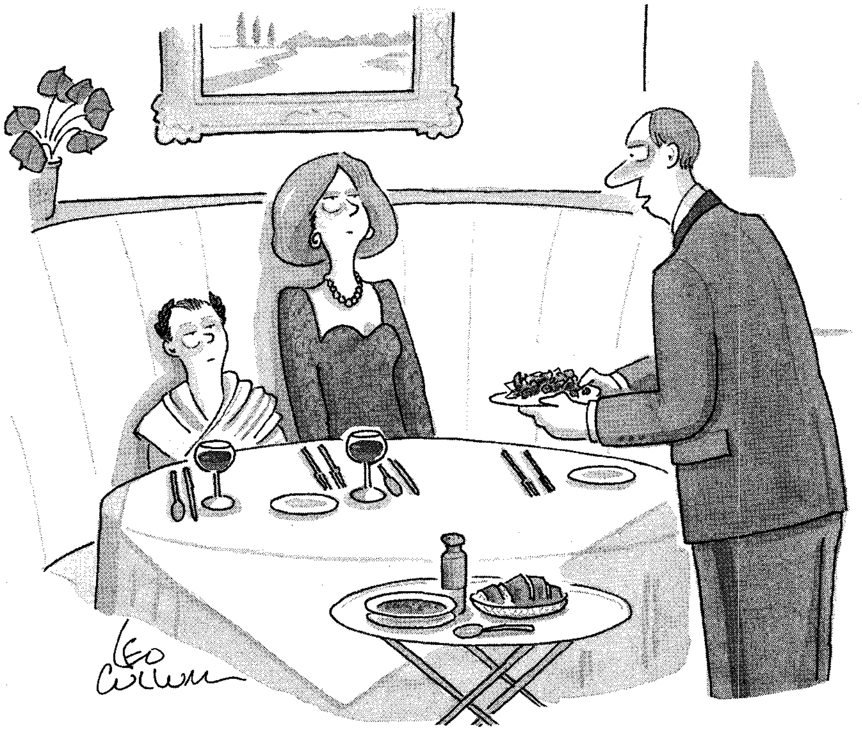
The clue to Emerson's character may well lie in his need to keep growing at all costs and his unappeasable hunger for firsthand experience. Richardson has a healthy regard for the elusiveness of his subject and sets out to reconstruct the "natural history" of Emerson's enthusiasms. He states that his book began as a companion to his intellectual biography of Henry Thoreau (1986), but that because Emerson's intellectual development proved inextricable from his personal and social experiences it turned into a full-scale biography. He thus takes to heart Emerson's first lesson—that everything emerges from the emergent self. History is grounded in biography, and transcendental philosophy is anchored in individual experience.

To understand Emerson, it is necessary to puncture the aura of deadly sobriety that still clings to him. He was Dionysian at heart. "Freed of his vast, unfortunate, and self-perpetuating reputation," Richardson writes, "Emerson steps forth as a complicated, energetic, and emotionally intense man who habitually spoke against the status quo and in favor of whatever was wild and free." He was a prism of contending forces—an extravagant thinker and fiery individualist who was also, in Richardson's words, "a good neighbor, an activist citizen, a fond father, a loyal brother, and a man whose many friendships framed his life." The sense that the biographer actually likes his subject pervades this account of Emerson's life.

The book is divided into a shapely hundred chapters: a collection of four-to-seven-page essays—each revolving around some aspect of Emerson's life or thought—deftly organized into chronological sequence.



A new biography gets to the heart of the man who felt that "life is an ecstasy."



"Small Caesar salad?"

• •

Time and again, Richardson proves that Emerson, an embracer at heart, had deep reserves of skepticism. Consequently, the biography begins not with one of the fabled affirmations but with a critical moment when its subject was twenty-eight years old. Already ministering to a prominent Boston church, Emerson was in the midst of a vocational crisis, questioning the sacrament of Communion and the idea of Christian immortality. His twenty-year-old wife, Ellen, whom he adored, had died fourteen months before, and he habitually walked out to the cemetery where she was buried. On March 29, 1832, he did something unusual, something he would repeat after his five-year-old son died: he opened the coffin and peered in. Richardson treats the first of these episodes as an emblematic act of confrontation, satisfying Emerson's craving for "direct, personal, unmediated experience." Maybe it was also his way of letting Ellen go. By year's end, he had resigned his ministry and sailed for Europe. It is crucial to recall Emerson as, among other things, a bereft widower and failed minister, repeatedly struggling with his own griefs and doubts in order to become a foursquare affirmer.

Born in 1803, he was the third of six sons (he also had two sisters, both of whom died in early childhood), and he was generally considered the least promising of the bunch. He was the silly kid in the family and the overlooked one. Years later, he asserted, "The advantage in education is always with those children who slip up into life without being objects of notice." The most striking figure of his youth was his father's sister, Mary Moody Emerson. This eccentric maiden aunt has often been caricatured and mined for good anecdotes (for starters, she was four feet three inches tall and slept in a coffin-shaped bed), but Richardson correctly views her as the single most important influence on her nephew Ralph's intellectual development, as a formidably outspoken and energetic religious thinker, an American Jakob Böhme. Emerson deemed his Aunt Mary "the best writer in Massachusetts." He copied out her letters and recorded her conversations in a manuscript that totalled eight hundred and seventy pages. Her unpublished writings were one of his main sourcebooks. Unlike his father, a nonreligious Unitarian, his aunt was a "deistic pietist," an exuberant visionary who saw death as life's culminating experience. Her motto was "Always do what you are afraid to do." She came to disapprove of her nephew's ideas, but more than anyone else she inspired him to think for himself.

A basic mystery of Emerson's life is how a mediocre college student and seemingly conventional young man turned himself into a bold, iconoclastic proponent of freedom and self-reliance. Sometime during his junior year at Harvard, his sense of himself changed. He stopped calling himself Ralph and started using the name Waldo. He began writing poetr seriously, kept a list of everything he read and entitled a series of notebooks "Wide World." Something had lit up from within and he spent his days "reading and writing and talking and walking." He loved religious eloquence—enthusiasm was his natural habitat—and soon was on the path to becoming a poet, an essayist, an orator

Emerson was an avid, creative, and intoxicated reader, and his reading wa continuously available to him because of his assiduous journal-keeping. He jotted down quotations, summarized arguments, appended comments on what he read. He registered everything personally treating it as grist for his own testamentary writing. He said, "The student is t read history actively and not passively; t esteem his own life the text, and book the commentary."

He combed thousands of volumes searching for what he called "lustres," and his biography is in good measure the story of a man who read in order to think and feel, and who often treated literature as a stimulus for ecstasy. He devoured memoirs, travel books, and religious autobiography as well as poetry. (He wrote, "I am born a poet, of a low class without doubt yet a poet. This is my nature and vocation.") Richardson shows him struggling to overcome Hume's skepticism, embracing Montaigne and Goethe, reading Plato through "at least seven discernible stages." He illustrates how enthusiastically Emerson responded to natural history and astronomy, how transcendentalism grew from his reading of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Carlyle, how he internalized Hebrew and Christian classics and resonated to the mystical writings of Pythagoras and Plotinus, Swedenborg and Böhme, venturing out to the religious literatures of Persia, India, and China. Reading enlarged him, but from the start he came to everything as an equal unwilling to defer or yield. He read in order to put reading aside. As Lewis Mumford wrote, "With most of the resources of the past at his command, Emerson achieved nakedness."

Writing things down was Emerson's way of thinking about them. The journals, really an assortment of notebooks, ledgers, and diaries, amount to more than three million words and some two hundred and sixty-three volumes of observations, anecdotes, conversations, ideas, meditations, dreams, and epiphanies. They are a stupendous work in and of themselves, and no selection could ever do hem full justice. Not only do they contain Emerson's most genuine writing; they also turn a searchlight on nineteenth-entury literature and life.

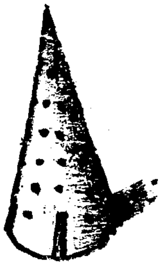
The journals reveal Emerson in all moods—cheerful, sarcastic, disoriented, panicky, self-critical, resolute, oracular. They show the intensity of his crises, the setbacks to his quest for self-realization, he recuperative force of his mind. They how how deeply he dreamed of being an Adamic, or primal, man. Here, for example, s an entry from the eighteen-forties:

> I dreamed that I floated at will in the great ther, and I saw this world floating also not r off, but diminished to the size of an apple. hen an angel took it in his hand and brought to me and said, "This must thou eat." And I e the world.

Nearly all Emerson's great ideas came o him first as journal entries. He called he journals his "savings bank" and used hem to construct his lectures and essays. His method—moving from unguarded diary entries and personal reflections to generalized statements and completed essays—illustrates how painstakingly he worked. Organization of argument was never his strength, and it's evident how desperately he struggled with language as a medium. "Here I sit and read and write with very little system, and as far as regards composition, with the most fragmentary results; paragraphs incompressible, each sentence an infinitely repellent particle." Reading the journals, we see how deeply he oscillated between rhapsody and despair, his heady self-confidence undermined by an involuntary nihilism. The journals additionally clarify why he called himself "a rocket manufacturer." His majestic sentences tend to break loose from their context and stand alone as aphorisms.

"I DO then with my friends as I do with my books," Emerson wrote in his essay "Friendship," thus disclosing a complex truth about himself. He both welcomed and resisted his many friends. He worked tirelessly on their behalf, but also viewed them across an unbridgeable gulf of solitude. His massive interiority was at odds with his cool visage. He burned internally and reproved himself for "superficial coldness and prudence." Yet his Yankee exterior served as protective coloration. He was determined to reach the heights and the depths on his own. "I am God in nature," he declared. "I am a weed by the wall." He radiated well-being from the lectern, but he referred to himself in writing as the "sad, estranged, misadventured, estrayed Waldo Emerson" and confided that after the age of thirty a man wakes up sad virtually every morning. Each of his excruciating personal losses—his wife Ellen (1831), his brother Charles (1836), and his son Waldo (1842)—left him unstrung and directionless, debilitated by grief, yet ultimately strengthened in his commitment to self-reliance and resolved to move on. He believed in the law of compensation and the transfer of energy: countering sadness with enthusiasm, ennui with work, isolation with colloquy. Process was all.

Emerson was especially responsive to quirky and grand visionaries. He was drawn to Jones Very, a self-styled "new born bard of the Holy Ghost," and to the shouting Methodist Edward Taylor. ("It may be that Emerson is going to hell," Taylor said, "but... he will change the climate there, and emigration will set that way.") He made deep connections with Thomas Carlyle and that most difficult disciple Henry Thoreau. And he responded brilliantly to the democratic cosmos of Walt Whitman. "I am not blind to the worth of the wonderful gift of 'Leaves of Grass,'" he wrote in what has become the most well-known letter in American literature. "I find it the most extraordinary piece of wit and wisdom that America has yet contributed." Whitman, for his part, understood that for American writers Emerson could never be wholly rejected. "Even when he falls on stony ground," Whitman said, "he somehow eventuates in a harvest."



It's hard to get an exact fix on Emerson's second marriage, to Lydia Jackson, in 1835, the most important relationship of his middle age. Their reserve was daunting. She always called him Mr. Emerson. Their daughter Ellen said, "The tremendous manner in which she loved father was always as astonishing to me as the coolness with which she treated him." More clear-cut, though still cloudy, was Emerson's friendship with Margaret Fuller. For a ten-year period, beginning in 1836, they regarded each other as something like soul mates. "I shall never go quite back to my old arctic habits," he wrote her, yet she complained that he held himself back. Fuller also introduced him to the free-spirited Caroline Sturgis, to whom he was warmly attracted. Is it too much to suggest, as Richardson does, that "in the early 1840s Emerson was living emotionally, though not physically, in what would now be called an open marriage"? No one knows whom, if anyone, Emerson was thinking of in his full-blown celebration of eros: "The heart has its sabbath and jubilees in which the world appears as a hymeneal feast, and the natural sounds and the circle of the seasons are erotic odes and dances."

Richardson follows Emerson's professional life from his abandoned ministry to his fame as a public intellectual. He covers all Emerson's key lectures, surveys his major books, examines his editorship of *The Dial*, traces his progress as a religious thinker and a proponent of American cultural ideals. And he eagerly shows Emerson responding as a social radical to current events. ("If a soul be taken and crushed by democracy till it utter a cry, that cry will be Emerson," John Jay Chapman wrote.) He was a party of one whose platform was "the infinitude of the private man." He supported business and the free market, distrusted politicians, railed against the idea of "the masses." He never preached a simpleminded individualism. Indeed, he took it for granted that "the philosopher, the poet, or the religious man will, of course, wish to cast his vote with the democrat, for free trade, for wide suffrage, for the abolition of legal cruelties in the penal code, and for facilitating in every manner the access of the young and the poor to the sources of wealth and power." He despised slavery and taught that divinity grows within each of us. "That which shows God in me, fortifies me," he wrote. "That which shows God out of me, makes me a wart and a wen."

Whenever he describes the power that resides within the autonomous self, his work rings out with eloquent pronounce-

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ments—calls to arms, really—about individualism. "Why should we not also enjoy an original relation to the universe?" he asks in his first book, "Nature." "All that Adam had, all that Caesar could, you have and can do." For the anti-Emerson camp, which includes Hawthorne, Melville (who wrote, "I do not oscillate in Emerson's rainbow"), T. S. Eliot, and Yvor Winters, Emerson's affirmation seems unacceptably positive, but, as Harold Bloom put it, "the mind of Emerson is the mind of America, for worse and for glory, and the central concern of that mind was the American religion, which most memorably was named 'self-reliance.'"

Was Emerson wholeheartedly optimistic about the world? In his journals he wrote, "I like the sayers of No better than the sayers of Yes." And there have always been those who perceived what Henry James called Emerson's "inner reserves and skepticisms, his secret ennuis and ironies." Like Whitman, he contains multitudes. He was a Nietzschean before Nietzsche, a pragmatist before William James, the progenitor of a line of American ar that includes Robert Frost and Wallac Stevens, Edward Hopper and Charles Ives Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright These figures have grasped the undertov in Emerson's thought, and the balance beam he walked between imaginativ plenitude and spiritual doubt. Emerso staked everything on the idea of self reliance, but he also called each man " congress of nations," and the self he ex alted is organic and unfixed, something t be invented at the edge of an abyss. Tha too, is part of his American ingenuit

What Emerson said about his Aur Mary applies to him as well: he, too, i a "Genius always new, subtle, frolic some, judicial, unpredictable." Wher ever we turn in the perpetual America quest for selfhood, Emerson is ther ahead of us, urging us to be more cre ative, beckoning us forward to our ow best selves. To read him fully is to b thrown into passionate currents and car ried away. "I am defeated all the time , he cried out, "yet to victory I am born."

WITNESS TO STRANGENESS

Espionage is only one of a Korean-American hero's secrets.

BY VERLYN KLINKENBORG

Chang-rae Lee

IN "Native Speaker" (Riverhead; $22.95), Chang-rae Lee's first novel, the central character is a young man named Henry Park, the son of Korean immigrants, who spies for Glimmer & Company, a small, private, information-gathering firm based in Purchase, New York. The Cold War is over, but at this level of espionage, halfway between Philip Marlowe and the C.I.A., the Cold War was never a necessary pretext. As Park puts it, "We pledged allegiance to no government. We weren't ourselves political creatures. We weren't patriots. . . . Our office motto: *Cowardice is what you make of it.*" Park's father, the owner of several produce stores in the Bronx and Manhattan, has died, and Park's marriage, to a speech therapist named Lelia, has come unglued for many reasons—his impassivity, his job, the accidental death of their son. At work, Park has begun to misalign the border between fiction and nonfiction, for the premise of "Native Speaker," as is so often the case in this genre, is that the spy is really a storyteller.

Yet "Native Speaker" is barely a spy novel. There is a plot—Park infiltrates the political organization of a New York City councilman named John Kwang, and then things go awry—but there is scarcely a *frisson* o be felt as it unwinds. Some spy novels play upon the pathology of class nd some play upon family pathology. "Native Speaker" is driven by the ilence of a Korean family, and its ubtext is the tortured ethnicity of he immigrant. Park assumes that for Korean immigrants like his parents, lass, ethnicity, and family are essenally subtle variations on the themes f identity and belonging. For Park's ther, "all of life was a rigid matter f family," yet in the second generaon this obsessive concern with "failial precision"—an emphasis on the most ritual decorum of household elationships—yields a vacuum. Park nakes—made—a good spy not because f a skill but because of what he conders a cultural deficiency: his abneation to role-playing. His boss tells im, "If I were running a big house ke the CIA, I'd breed agents by raisng white kids in your standard Asian ousehold. Discipline farms." Park ew up not with the kind of storylling that produces a family web of rrative but with koans. "*San konno n itta*," his mother would say. "Over e mountains there are mountains." he way Korean stories work, Park xplains, is that "everybody dies but ne. And the one has little to live for." he existential fit between a spy and ne culture that produced him has nevr been closer.

If there is such a thing as a genre of irst novels, "Native Speaker" subverts he conventions of that genre. It takes s its subjects the things that often preoccupy novelists on their first outing—language, family, identity—and it turns them inside out, making literal what is usually only metaphorical. Lee honors the feeling of being a secret witness to the strangeness of one's family by making Park a real spook. Park's worries about language are almost obsessively literal, a matter of "r"s and "l"s, the difficulty of pronouncing words like "frivolous" and "barbarian" for those who have grown up speaking Korean. "Native Speaker" is a novel about Park's feeling that people like him "are always thinking about still having an accent." When he first met Lelia, he noticed above all "that she could really speak. At first I took her as being exceedingly proper, but I soon realized that she was simply executing the language. She went word by word. Every letter had a border."

"Native Speaker" creates almost all its effects through implication, and Lee's power of implication is all the richer because in Henry Park the spy's sense of doubleness is doubled by the immigrant's sense of doubleness. Here, for instance, is one of Park's small fugues on difference and sameness, an oratory of the kind he characteristically rises to, fraught with a sense of audience:

> My ugly immigrant's truth is that I have exploited my own, and those others who can be exploited. This forever is my burden to bear. But I and my kind possess another dimension. We will learn every lesson of accent and idiom, we will dismantle every last pretense and practice you hold, noble as well as ruinous. You can keep nothing safe from our eyes and ears. This is your own history. We are your most perilous and dutiful brethren, the song of our hearts at once furious and sad. For only you could grant me these lyrical modes. I call them back to you. Here is the sole talent I ever dared nurture. Here is all of my American education.

Lee carries the silence of Henry Park's family—where silence feels like obstruction—into the heart of his novel. The prose he writes is elliptical, riddling, poetic, often beautifully made. "You are your cheapest labor," Park muses. "Here is the great secret, the great mystery to an immigrant's success, the dwindle of irredeemable hours beneath the cheap tube lights. Pass them like a machine. Believe only in chronology. This will be your coin-small salvation." Prose like that is the pleasure of "Native Speaker" and also its problem. Henry Park will declaim to himself on any occasion, and the result is usually wonderful, instructive. But every sentence he speaks stands foursquare, sunk into the earth on posts. Every sentence is a climax and an understatement, a koan of his own. It's the right language for insight, for revelation, even for threats, but it's the wrong language for telling a spy story. It doesn't tilt enough to be brisk, nor is it interested enough in the whys and wherefores that govern a plot. "Native Speaker" lets you read as deeply as you wish, though the deeper you read the more you begin to question its surfaces. Spying seems, after all, like too small a vehicle for ambitions of the kind that Chang-rae Lee rightly harbors. ♦

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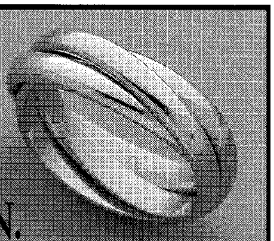

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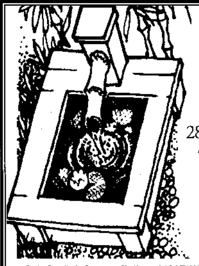

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RECOMMENDED READING

At Home with the Glynns

by Eric Kraft

(Crown; $20)

This latest installment in the personal history of Peter Leroy, Kraft's fictional alter ego, is a witty and wildly digressive epistemological examination in the form of a childhood reminiscence. In the course of his musings, Leroy recalls—among a thousand other things—his neighbor Rosetta Glynn's notion of dinner rolls as symbols of hope, her husband's ingenious method of revealing ideal forms, and his own sexual coming of age at the hands of the precocious Glynn twins (who are not really twins, "but that's another story").

The Garlic Ballads

by Mo Yan; translated from the Chinese by Howard Goldblatt

(Viking; $23.95)

This powerful, misanthropic saga of survival-scrabbling garlic farmers betrayed by their government was originally banned in China. Complex multiple treacheries, familial and official, illustrate the rottenness of society: it's hard to tell courtship from rape, marriage from slavery, food from garbage, or jail from hell. But, as Mo piles grimness on grimness with Rabelaisian gusto, the reader is more exhilarated than depressed.

Robert E. Lee: A Biography

by Emory M. Thomas

(Norton; $30)

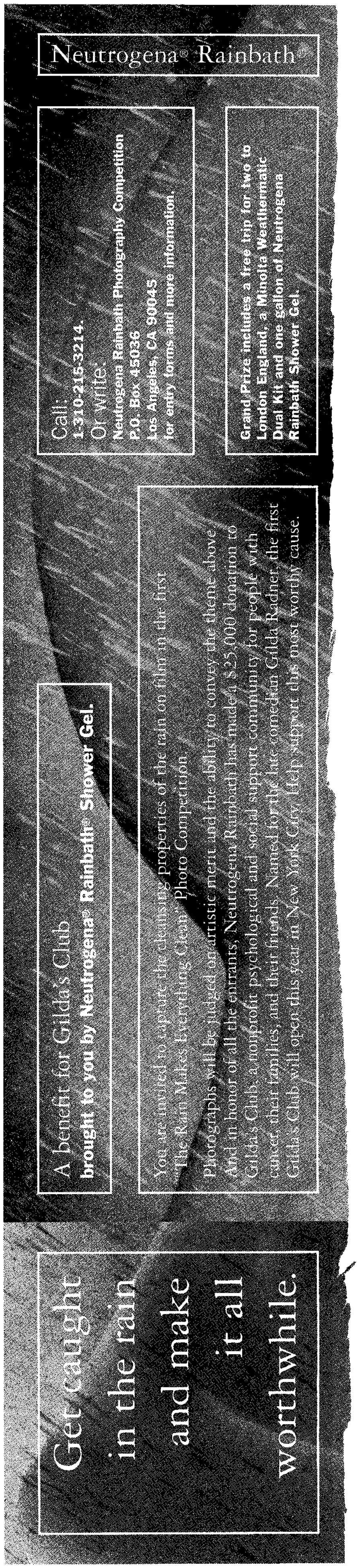
Lee's reputation as a military genius and his dignified behavior in defeat have led many biographers to become hagiographers, while others have reacted to his canonization with revisionist devaluations of his career. Thomas offers a "post-revisionist" view—one that shows Lee's battlefield audacity to be prompted by the limited resources of the Confederacy and his personal dignity to be the product of a lifelong effort to avoid the shame that attended his feckless father. Thomas may lack the literary gifts of Douglas Southall Freeman, Lee's most prominent celebrator, but his Lee seems more true to life.

The Liars' Club

by Mary Karr

(Viking; $22.95)

This barbed memoir of a close and calamitous family from a Texas oil town moves with the same quickness as its double-edged title. Karr, the daughter of a lean, one-punch refinery worker and an artiste with a past, lovingly retells their best lies and drunken extravagances with an ear for bar-stool phraseology ("A butt like two bulldogs in a bag") and a winking eye for image (to describe spinning away from spankings, she quotes Yeats's widening gyre). The revelations continue to the final page, with a misleading carelessness as seductive as any world-class liar's.



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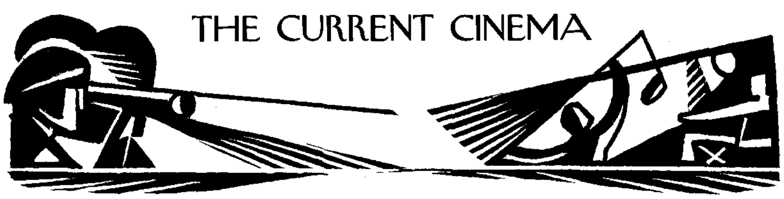
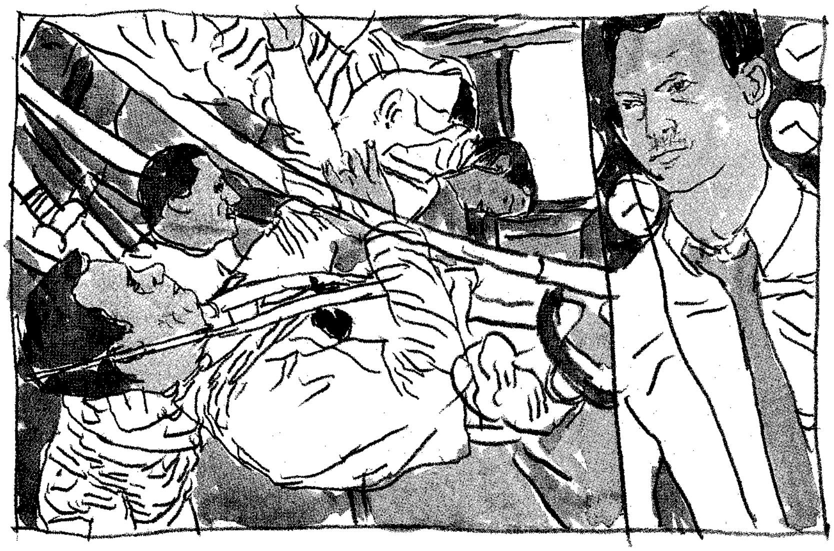


FLYING BLIND

A stirring true-life adventure and a new Batman picture.

BY TERRENCE RAFFERTY

RON HOWARD'S "Apollo 13" is the true story of a manned lunar mission in which almost every-ing went wrong. The mission, launched ccessfully on April 11, 1970, was the ird of the American space program's ven attempts to land men on the oon, and the only one that failed. Two ys into the flight—more than three-quarters of the way to the moon—an oxygen tank exploded, crippling the spacecraft that carried the astronauts Jim Lovell (played here by Tom Hanks), Jack Swigert (Kevin Bacon), and Fred Haise (Bill Paxton). It quickly became clear that a moon landing was out of the question, and that in these circumstances there was a real possibility that the astronauts would never come home. Lovell, Swigert, and Haise had to shut down their command module—in order to save its much diminished power for reëntry into the earth's atmosphere—and move into the lunar-excursion module, which was undamaged but wasn't ideally suited to its new purpose: it was designed to accommodate only two men, and its power supply was limited. For the next three and a half days, the crew—trapped, cramped, cold, and sleep-deprived—waited and worried as the NASA scientists at Mission Control, in Houston, worked frantically to solve problems that they had never imagined having to face. They did manage to get the astronauts back to earth alive, and when the forlorn-looking capsule, dangling from parachutes, splashes down at the end of "Apollo 13" it's hard not to feel that this failed mission was the most impressive achievement of the entire space program. The other missions were triumphs of planning; Apollo 13 was a triumph of improvisation.



Lost in space: Tom Hanks, Bill Paxton, Kevin Bacon, and Gary Sinise in "Apollo 13."

And this seat-of-the-pants flight is, of course, much better dramatic material than the smooth-running missions that preceded and followed it. As the movie—which is based on the book "Lost Moon," by Lovell and Jeffrey Kluger—points out, NASA's carefully engineered miracles had begun to seem almost routine to the American public as early as the spring of 1970, just nine months after the Apollo 11 astronauts' historic

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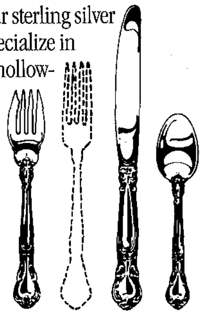

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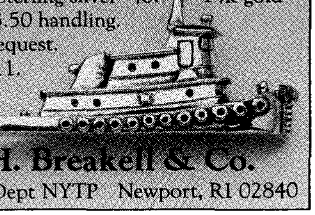

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walk on the moon. From a spectator's point of view, a perfectly executed scientific space mission really isn't much of a story. There's none of the tension that narrative needs, because the primary goal of the participants is to minimize risk: a boring flight is a good flight. "Apollo 13" is rarely boring. In a sense, it's a real-life variation on the disaster-movie formula of the "Airport" movies in the seventies, with a bit of cosmic chill to further whiten the knuckles of the imperilled fliers: the astronauts face the prospect of dying in space, of being lost forever in the void. Ron Howard, to his credit, doesn't rely too heavily on the science-fiction horror of the crew's situation; he concentrates instead on the intricate moment-to-moment business of keeping the men alive inside their fragile, ravaged machine. The movie dramatizes the astronauts' journey as a succession of small, specific tests of ingenuity and fortitude—as a series of trials.

The screenplay, by William Broyles, Jr., and Al Reinert (the director of the exhilarating 1989 documentary about the Apollo program, "For All Mankind"), makes the scientific details of the mission both comprehensible and exciting. It takes nerve to try to engage the audience's interest with calculations of electrical capacity, the plotting of navigational coördinates, and the design of carbon-dioxide filters. The filmmakers seem to understand, though, that in a case like that of Apollo 13 technical problems lose their abstract quality. The breakdown of a complex system automatically returns technology to a human scale, forcing the user to reëxamine its components, rethink its structure, and reëvaluate its capabilities. What the NASA people do in "Apollo 13" seems as familiar, and as urgent, as looking under the hood of a car that has stalled on a desert highway. Howard has made some genuinely terrible movies—"Cocoon," "Backdraft," "Far and Away"—but he has a gift for telling complicated stories clearly; as he demonstrated in "Splash" and "The Paper" (and even in the sappy "Parenthood"), he's good at keeping several balls in the air, and he knows how to get sharp performances from actors in large ensembles. Hanks, Bacon, and Paxton work together beautifully—they seem like a real crew—and you can also feel their connection to the rest of the NASA team: the earnest, shirtsleeved men huddled at consoles in Houston, an impossible distance away. The performances are so low-key and so self-effacing that it seems unfair to single one out, but Ed Harris, playing the tense, fiercely determined flight director Gene Kranz, is electrifying. It's not that Harris does anything showy; the flight director is the man who makes the final decisions in the control room, and the actor, simply by embodying the character's tight-lipped efficiency and unquestionable air of authority, commands the screen as if by right.

For all the skill and care that have gone into "Apollo 13," the movie, like the mission itself, gets home safely only by the skin of its teeth. The cinematography, by Dean Cundey, is disappointingly drab, and the score, by James Horner, is worse than that: the hysterical heavenly choirs on the soundtrack make you yearn for the silence of the void. And Howard, as he did in "The Paper," periodically retards the movie's momentum with slackly conceived domestic drama. There's no reason for him to cut away so frequently to shots of Lovell's wife, Marilyn (Kathleen Quinlan), and their kids, because every scene makes the same unsurprising point: they're mighty worried. Whenever Howard fires one of these retro-rockets of family-values sentimentality, you begin to fear that the movie's luck has run out and the whole elaborate thing is just going to free-fall into the vacuum of Hollywood banality. Somehow, though, "Apollo 13" keeps righting itself, and by the end you may even find the movie's raggedness sort of touching. The picture runs on chewing gum and rubber bands, but it's still a lively and stirring trip.

THE title "Batman Forever" has a quaint, tender ring to it, like a declaration of love carved into a tree trunk or shyly inscribed in a yearbook. But by the time the movie that bears this name is over the words sound more like a threat. "Batman Forever" has the unpleasant, blandly aggressive tone of a letter from a collection agency (albeit one with a spiffy logo), and audiences, who can take a hint, are paying up dutifully: the movie raked in a hundred and six million dollars in its first ten days of release. In the comic-book world from which Batman emerged (the nocturnal avenger, the alter ego of an orphaned millionaire named Bruce Wayne, was created by the artist Bob Kane 1939), the heroes swoop down in tl nick of time to foil the villains' grand ose schemes. In the real world, eve timely interventions don't always do tl trick; and warning viewers *now* th "Batman Forever" is an appalling mov is the critical equivalent of closing tl barn door after the cows have all ri away. But to those viewers who have yet responded to the studio markete relentless pressure, I'd like to say: Do do it. This picture has none of the da wit and visual ingenuity of "Batma (1989) and "Batman Returns" (199 both of which were directed by the e centric wizard Tim Burton. His hire gun successor, Joel Schumacher, h coarsened the series' humor and blurr its radiantly weird visual style: "Batm Forever" is self-consciously jokey, li the "Batman" TV series of the sixti and the cinematographer Stephen Gol blatt's images have the smudged, run look of a cheaply printed comic boo

The new Batman, Val Kilmer (he r places Michael Keaton), doesn't bri much to the party, either. In his eleg Bruce Wayne suits, he seems less a m with a secret than a man with very u comfortable underwear; in his skintig Batsuit he looks like an action toy, ar his voice emerges from the bulging rul bery form with the halting, strangle quality of a computer-generated me sage. Perhaps to make up for the hero sudden loss of personality—and certainl to improve the product's demographics—the filmmakers have supplied hin with a young sidekick, Robin (known i the comics, but not in the movie, as th Boy Wonder), played by Chris O'Don nell. He's dull, too. The star villains ar Tommy Lee Jones, as Two-Face, and Jim Carrey, as the Riddler. Jones is uncharacteristically bad, but by the end o the picture he has, at least, become fairly inconspicuous; he recognizes that he can't outmug Carrey, so he stops trying And Carrey, energetic though he is, isn nearly as much fun here as he was in last summer's "The Mask." What's really disheartening about "Batman Forever" is that, if the box-office returns are any indication, the movie's slovenliness and cynicism don't seem to matter to the audience. Burton's Batman picture didn't leave viewers feeling small. There' some dignity in surrendering to a bat there's none in surrendering to a turkey.

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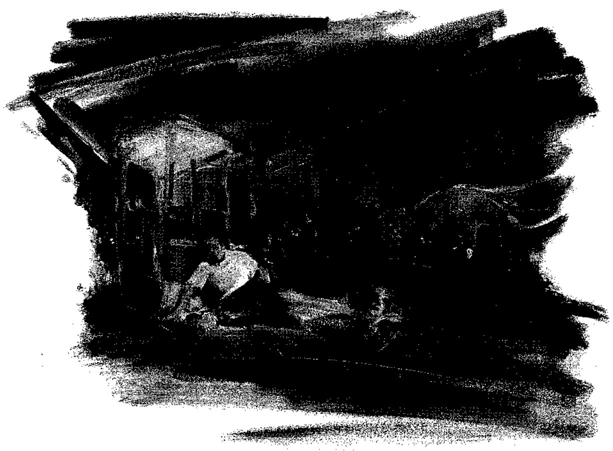
ON-LINE WITH KING KONG

Harrison Birtwistle's new opera at Glyndebourne.

BY PAUL GRIFFITHS

MOST of the stories that opera can tell don't need to be told again: they go on telling themselves, night after night, in opera houses around the world. Harrison Birtwistle's fifth full-length opera, "The Second Mrs. Kong," written for Glyndebourne, has just been enjoying its first festival performances, amid some of the old stories. Nicholas Hytner's smart production of "La Clemenza di Tito" has been revived, not so smartly sung as when it was first presented, in 1991, but with a magnificent Annio in the young Danish singer Hanne Fischer, and magnificently conducted by Mark Elder, who shows the music pushing forward toward the nineteenth century. Also in the repertory is a new staging of Rossini's "Ermione," a classical tragedy that not even Graham Vick, Glyndebourne's director of productions, can prevent from seeming frivolous. Mr. Vick's vivid stare at "The Queen of Spades" comes back later in the season, once more with the extraordinary Yuri Marusin in the main role. Deborah Warner's production of "Don Giovanni" will also be defiantly back in the theatre, and there's a new "Makropulos Case," with Anja Silja, staged by the director (Nikolaus Lehnhoff) and the designer (Tobias Hoheisel) who were responsible for Glyndebourne's strong, straight, and beautiful productions, in previous seasons, of two other Janáček pieces.



The diminishment of grand archetypes: Philip Langridge as Kong and Michael Chance as Orpheus.

KEN KRAFCHEK

Entering such a babble, what can a new opera do? Not tell stories, perhaps, but listen to them. Singers must still be there, and the characters those singers are constantly becoming, but the center of gravity will have gone down into the orchestra, where the deeds onstage are being prepared and mulled over. Birtwistle's first opera, "Punch and Judy," was led not so much by its voices as by the shrieks, bangs, clockworks, and long, wan melodies of its instruments. Next, in "The Mask of Orpheus"—his most far-reaching and majestic achievement to date—what we saw was driven by what we heard. The music mused over rival versions of the same action, and claimed for itself sole authority. In "Gawain" the sung narrative was much simpler, but still the music went its own way, and when, from time to time, it hailed the story it did so from a distance. Following on from those works, "The Second Mrs. Kong" has a story withered into nonsense, a story from which the music takes only an atmosphere mingled of sombreness and charm, and certain by-the-way responsibilities to signal events.

There's a scene in the second act where two characters from what you have to regard as the comic subplot—Mr. Dollarama, a Hollywood mogul, and Inanna, his blowsy wife, both now deceased, as are most of the people in this opera—are squabbling about the insufficiencies of their married life, which is evidently continuing into a married death. Mr. Birtwistle's setting is sharp enough to just about rescue the tired repartee, but his main musical business is in the orchestra, where he creates a machinery of low pedal tones, slow waves made up of faster oscillations in the strings, and a melody that wanders and forks through the wind ensemble. More than aural scene-setting is going on. The music indeed has some feeling of the waste of black water over which the departed are rowing back to the here and now, but in its complexity it has a life—or a death—of its own, and it maintains a steady tempo quite distinct from the voices' yattering time world. It accommodates the characters, and its accommodation—coupled with a striking gift for comic timing that one couldn't have expected from this composer—makes "The Second Mrs. Kong" a happy piece. But it also exceeds them and, by its excess, becomes more than an entertainment. The effect is a bit as if episodes from a sitcom were being projected onto the megaliths of Stonehenge.

A DESCRIPTION of the piece, therefore, has to begin with the music rather than with the plot. The score is for a modest orchestra but a characteristically weighty one. As in "Gawain," the far bass is assured by a pair of tubas; the opera begins, loweringly, with these instruments—along with bassoons and low strings—and they're often present in what follows. The music speaks with a subterranean voice, a voice that, perhaps because it's below any human vocal range, seems to be below speech, so that we interpret it as an inner voice, the voice of slowly churning—and sometimes galloping, fitful—memory. Helping in this identification is the fact that Mr. Birtwistle's orchestral melodies never come to an end: there's never an object or a feeling or an event remembered but, instead, always the process of remembering. And that process goes on from one piece into the next. "Gawain" is recalled not only by the tubas but also by the cimbalom and, more specifically, by a gesture of dissolution, of instruments spilling together down scales. From the piano concerto "Antiphonies"—the major work Mr. Birtwistle wrote between "Gawain" and "Kong," and now happily available on record—comes the lost sound of piccolos displaced high above the orchestral texture.

But, of course, the new opera isn't all extension and reprise. Mr. Birtwistle sets himself a fresh orchestrational challenge by introducing an accordion, which he generally uses to double some other section and impart a wheeze to the harmony. Further novelties are made possible by the opera's twentieth-century location, which the composer seizes as virgin material. All his previous operas were set in myth time, and now he has the opportunity to imitate a ringing telephone in his orchestra or create a dead city street with bluesy saxes; these momentary musical illustrations, though, are particular cases of more general features in the score. The double ring of the phone soon reappears as a vicious double thrust to give a rhythm and a force to the opera's most violent scene: it's still keyed into the action, but moved from sound effect to dramatic symbol on its way back to becoming a matter of orchestral form and expression.

The libretto, by Russell Hoban, sets much of the first act in "the world of shadows where the dead live"—a place that conveniently makes it possible for a movie character, King Kong, to overhear a seventeenth-century artist's model, the sitter for Vermeer's "Girl with a Pearl Earring," singing to a mirror. When, after many vicissitudes, Pearl and Kong meet, the mirror tells them they can't stay together, because "this is the moment when reality begins." It seems a pretty feeble reason for denying an odd but likable couple eternal happiness, and if I were Pearl or Kong I think I'd say to hell with reality, which hasn't had much part in the proceedings so far. However, librettos are meant to hold not water but music, and this one works well enough for that purpose.

To some extent, anything would. In that the music steers its own course, little depends on what it's intermittently paying attention to. Even so, it does get more involved, at least in terms of pace, as the opera goes on—perhaps as the composer relaxes into enjoying himself. After an age of grandeur and dolefulness, the orchestra suddenly wakes up for an excited sprint when Pearl, now a painting, has her face multiplied around the world in reproductions, and the subsequent Internet conversation betwee Pearl and Kong continues at a cop typist's moto perpetuo. The score als gets more involved in the detail of th piece—and not only the contempora detail. The first entry of the mirror breathtaking: a close duet for high so prano with her own recorded self, in stratosphere of tuned percussion, hig flute, and strings playing harmonic The sphinx who sits at the gateway the real world—a contralto who's hea it all and sung most of it—is a ni comic creation. And the music's engag ment with the action reaches a climax intensity in the scene where Kong a Pearl meet, when her voice is perpetuat by the instruments in two ecstatic cr scendos of hope. But as vain as that ho perhaps, is the hope for a continuing co junction of music and text, and wh Mr. Hoban's libretto skitters on tryi to make sense of itself Mr. Birtwistl score draws heavily off into its own adie

The Glyndebourne presentation excellent in nearly all departments. El Howarth, conducting, delivers the m sical action powerfully. Tom Cairn production has magic and humor, a captures what the piece expresses of t diminishment of grand archetypes. A of the opera's appeal resides in its Ari tophanic display of failed gods: an O pheus for whom plaintiveness has b come a mild self-gratification, an Anu bis who—like an opera audience—tak pleasure in lapping up, again and agai scenes of love and death. As for Kong most composers would have made hi a deep bass. Mr. Birtwistle goes for tenor (Philip Langridge, in engagin form), whose unsuitability for the role o monster is wonderfully apt. This is comedy, not a horror movie. Also, by denying his hero sonorous tonnage, Mr Birtwistle keeps it for his orchestra. In "Punch and Judy," Punch's war cry is scary; Kong's parallel forest call is an item in his gentle lyricism.

What's left for the next productio is to restore the figure of Paganin among the dead, so as to obviate the need for some of the cuts, to explain why Mr. Birtwistle has written so many violin solos (and brilliant solos, too, from a composer whose sympathies remain strongly in the wind and percussion departments), and to ad another signal that what this opera i about is the enormity we call music.

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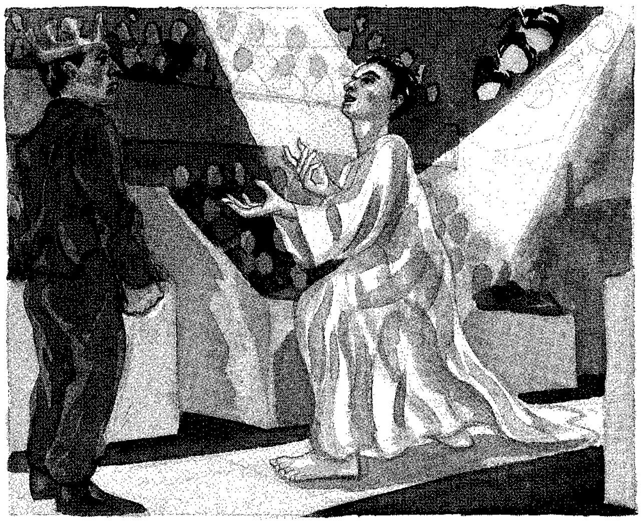
BY JOHN LAHR



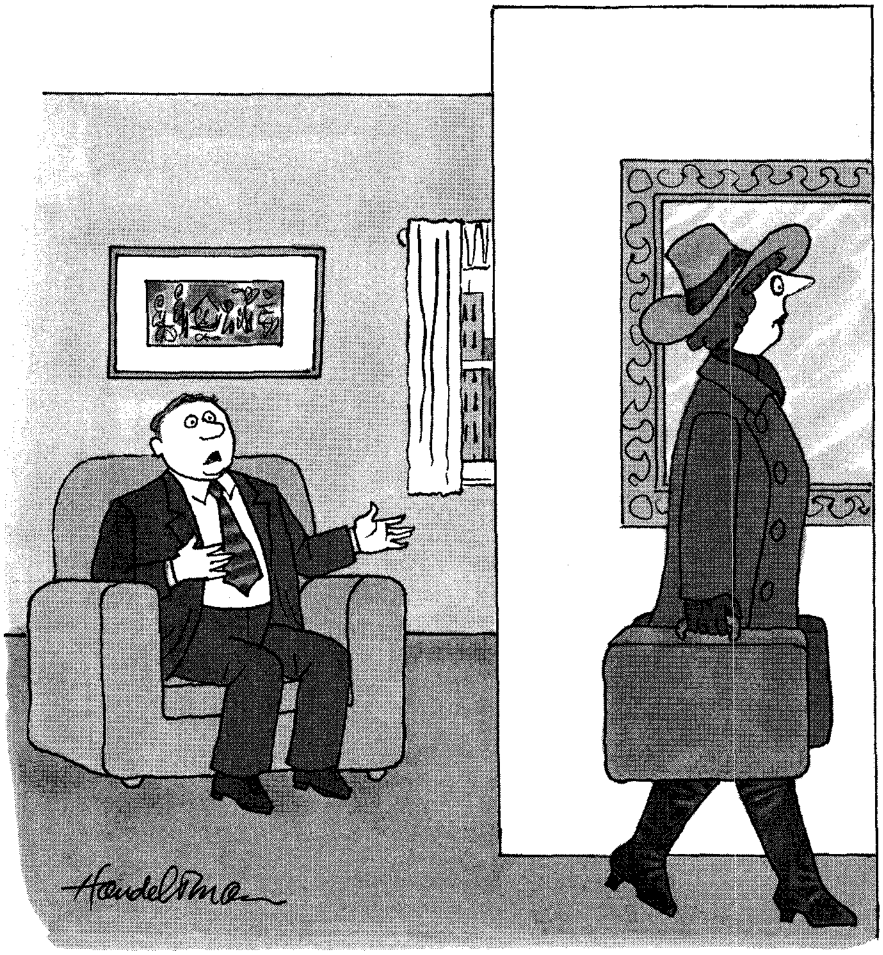
"The breath of worldly men": David Threlfall as Bolingbroke / Henry IV, and Fiona Shaw as Richard II.

JOHN DEWE MATHEWS

YOU enter Deborah Warner's thrilling London production of Shakespeare's "Richard II" (c. 1595) to the chanting of Latin, the flicker of candles, and the smell of incense. Here, in the medieval murk of the two-hundred-and-seventy-seven-seat Cottesloe Theatre, the most intimate and interesting of the Royal National Theatre spaces, the audience looks down into an oblong corridor as if onto a bull run. The proximity of the stage intensifies the fun for the spectators and the focus for the actors. At one end of the corridor, a gauzy curtain separates an "offstage" royal-court area, with gilt floors and walls, from the plain, streamlined public space on which we're focussed. On each side of the narrow alley, cordons protect seven silver stands on which miniatures (a crystal ball, a golden coin, a tiny dagger) are set out; these tokens of the enormous wealth that Richard II was famous for squandering are hustled away as the lights come up. (According to the program, Richard II spent the fourteenth-century equivalent of as much as a million pounds a year on ceremonial display of his power.) The gilt walls and floors of the court space hint at the King's lavishness; but Shakespeare's drama and Warner's marvellous interpretation of it are about the waste and marshalling of inner, not external, resources.

Richard II became king in 1377, at the age of ten, but ruled unchallenged only for a decade; the play deals with the final year of his reign. (He was deposed in 1399 and died the following year, at the age of thirty-three.) Richard was something of a fashion plate (the handkerchief, used to wipe his upturned nose, was one of his sartorial innovations) and an aesthete (he was a patron of Chaucer and Gower). In the realms of state, he was wayward: "O King," Gower wrote in "Vox Clamantis" (c. 1382), "let thy people be subject to thee for love and not for fear." Over three hours, in the most lyrical and, some think, the most passive of Shakespeare's tragedies, the contest of love and fear in the body politic is acted out in an arena that, through Hildegard Bechtler's dynamic set design, becomes, variously, a parliament, a battlefield, a garden, a throne room, and a prison, as the issues of royal misrule and royal right rule are tested.

Richard II enters in a scrum of handsome courtiers. He is played by the superb Irish actress Fiona Shaw. The arc of Richard II's character generally moves from vanity to vulnerability; but, except for an embroidered cloak, there's little outward sign of fustian indulgence in



"But I'm accustomed to captivity. I wouldn't survive a day in the wild."

• •

Shaw's Richard II. Her hair is cropped short. She stands wide-eyed, blinking, sometimes even pigeon-toed before us; her smile is tight with uncertainty, and there is a boyish spring to her step. Smooth-faced and soft-skinned, Shaw eliminates the effeteness with which Richard is often played; her feminine qualities hint instead at the coddled, pristine, almost mutant unreality of the boy king; she has called him "a kind of pupa of specialness." Even when he dons the crown to sort out the furious quarrel between his beloved cousin and boyhood friend Henry Bolingbroke, the Duke of Hereford (played by the staunch, subtle David Threlfall), and Thomas Mowbray, the Duke of Norfolk (the suave David Lyon), this king is uneasy in his skin and in his ruling role. He lacks command. As Shaw plays him, Richard II doesn't quite know how to set his face or deploy his force when he is administering power. Here Richard's famous scrutiny of his hand mirror is about the image of majesty, not about vainglory.

The play's first scene fixes Richard II in long shot, framing both his good intentions and his bad government. On the face of it, the King wants peace. "Forget, forgive, conclude and be agreed, / Our doctors say this is no month to bleed," Richard tells the fractious nobles. But his wit, however elegant, can't disarm them or dispel the climate of suspicion that has followed the murder of Richard's uncle, the Duke of Gloucester—the crux of the original fracas. Richard makes a great show of fairness to Mowbray. "Impartial are our eyes and ears," he says, adding that, despite his affection for Bolingbroke, "Such neighbour nearness to our sacred blood / Should nothing privilege him, nor partialize / The unstooping firmness of my upright soul." Fearing that Bolingbroke may be killed, he peremptorily stops the contest. His draconian solution to the conflict is to banish both men from England. Bolingbroke's sentence of ten years in exile suddenly commuted to six when th King is moved by the distress on th face of Bolingbroke's aged father (an Richard's counsellor), John of Gaun But Mowbray is banished forever. Th sentence is a spectacular political misca culation. In that arbitrary split-secor choice, Richard displays a lack of bo personal and political imagination. H mistakes force for authority. "After o sentence plaining comes too late," h tells the stunned Mowbray with breat taking arrogance. His assumption— immature one—is that by eliminati the anxiety of his feuding gentry he h eliminated possible challenges to h reign. He makes the knights take a oath to that effect. The fact is, howev that Richard has only multiplied h problems. Bolingbroke, who has t democratic touch, goes into exile like hero—"As were our England in reve sion his," Richard observes warily. courtier, echoing Richard's impulse f retreat, answers, "Well, he is gone, a with him go these thoughts." But a sence of opposition, like the absence anxiety, trivializes; and Richard alm immediately becomes more impetuo and cruel. He turns to military incu sions into Ireland, with plans to soak th rich to pay for them. When Richard on his way to Gaunt's deathbed, his ca lous wit startles with its heartlessnes "Pray God we may make haste and com too late!"

"RICHARD II" is as much about th perception of power as about th seizing of it. The King, whose divin right makes him indifferent to consensus, disdains Bolingbroke's "courtshi to the common people . . . Wooing poo craftsmen with the craft of smiles." Richard, for his part, makes a show of his separation from the citizenry, and he ignores the advisers who remind him of the divisiveness of his behavior. John of Gaunt (superbly played by Graham Crowden), on his deathbed, speaks some of the greatest stage poetry Shakespeare ever wrote about England ("This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars, / This other Eden, demi-paradise"), but in the next breath rounds on Richard: "Landlord of England art thou now, not king." The Duke of York (a beautifully cadenced, elegant piece of comic plain speaking from Michael Bryant) tries in ain to warn Richard about the political onsequences of illegally seizing the abent Bolingbroke's assets: "You pluck a housand dangers on your head, / You ose a thousand well-disposed hearts." istory soon proves York right. When ichard returns from Ireland, most of is court and his army have gone over o Bolingbroke, who has returned om exile to reclaim his land and, ultiately, to take the throne. "The breath f worldly men cannot depose / The eputy elected by the Lord," Richard ys. But it can, and does.

The bloodless coup, like the first quarl with Mowbray, is something of a thetrical non-event. Bolingbroke approaches; e King surrenders. Here what makes ese scenes exhilarating is Warner's carel attention to the theatrics of statesanship and to the psychology of loss, hich are the real lessons of Shakespeare's lay. Instead of annihilating Richard, olingbroke continually manipulates im, conciliating as he conquers. "Let's arch without the noise of threat'ning um," he says, and later, when he mes face to face with Richard in the arvellous abdication scene, he tells his ction, "Stand all apart, / And show r duty to his Majesty." Bolingbroke, ho will become King Henry IV, knows hat power is, in part, a confidence trick, nd that a proper spectacle must be ade of the calm transfer of authority: So we shall proceed / Without suspiion." Richard II is called into "common iew." Barefoot, carrying his crown in a icker basket, Richard enters to face his surper. The Bishop of Carlisle (John Rogan) has just delivered a jeremiad about the anarchy of abdication ("Prevent it, resist it, let it not be so"), and Shaw's Richard is almost giddy with grief as he sprawls on a bench and cries, "God save the King! Will no man say amen?" No one speaks; the words, at once awful and ironic, seem to echo down the ages. We watch in wonder—just as Shakespeare wanted us to watch—the notion of modern government taking shape before our eyes. Shaw makes Richard's descent into nothingness unforgettable: first pressing her head against the back of the empty throne, then smashing the hand mirror that once reflected the King's glory and now confirms his humiliation. "How soon my sorrow hath destroyed my face," he ays, conflating a literal and a metaphorical loss of face. Bolingbroke folds his cousin in his arms as Richard sobs, "I have no name, no title." It's a huge moment, which Shaw and Threlfall play off love, not hate.

In the final scenes, the imprisoned Richard achieves a measure of emotional maturity before he is murdered in Pomfret Castle. "I wasted time, and now doth time waste me," he says, taking responsibility for his downfall and facing his own unhappiness with a stoic shrug at mankind, who "With nothing shall be pleas'd, till he be eas'd / With being nothing." Shakespeare uses King Henry's last scenes as a model of exemplary pragmatic rule. When the Duke of York discovers that his son, the Duke of Aumerle (Julian Rhind-Tutt), is plotting Henry's murder, he and his whole family hightail it to the new King and plead their different cases. In a terrific confrontation, well blocked by Warner and well played by Paola Dionisotti as the Duchess of York, who prostrates herself before him, the King's probity and realpolitik are acted out. "Our scene is alter'd from a serious thing, /And now chang'd to 'The Beggar and the King,' " King Henry says. His joke displays the detachment that Richard has acquired only through loss. King Henry pardons the Duke of York's son for plotting his assassination but deals ruthlessly with the rest of the cabal. "A god on earth thou art," the Duchess says of King Henry's mercy, which by contrast to Richard's is firm but fair.

Even Richard II's murder allows Shakespeare to present a lesson in royal leadership. The corpse is brought before the King. The murderer gets no reward or acknowledgment from King Henry, who says in the play's final beats, "Though I did wish him dead, I hate the murderer, love him murdered." His self-awareness is startling. He is in touch with the soul of the people and with his own soul. "Lords, I protest, my soul is full of woe / That blood should sprinkle me to make me grow," he says. In being able to hold hard and contradictory feelings and still act, King Henry exhibits the essential qualities of strong leadership. In this production, Warner and her excellent ensemble achieve something of the same hard-nosed, vigorous show of strength: making a spectacle of articulate ambiguity, they return a sense of greatness to the play. ♦

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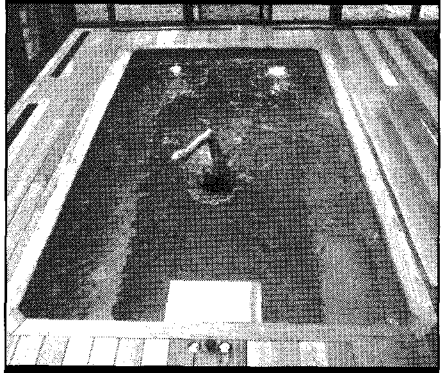

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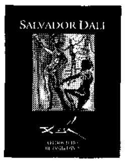

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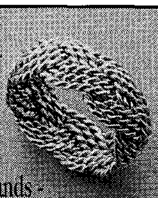

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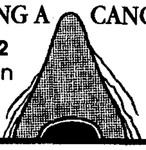

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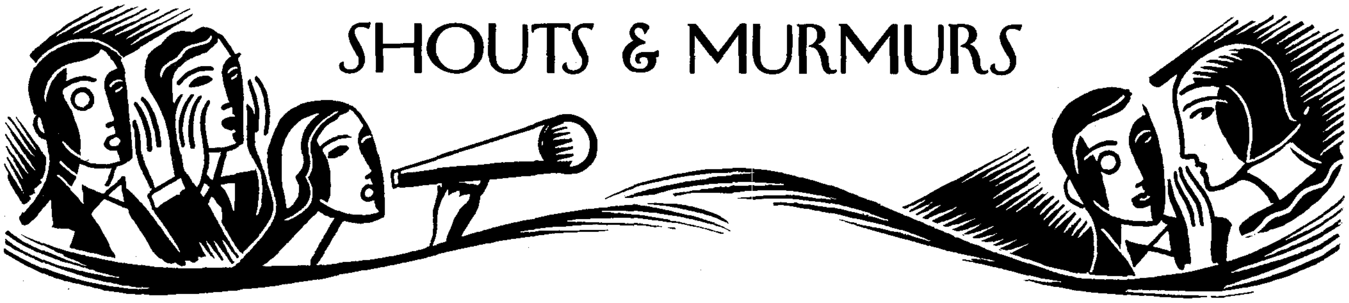

SHOUTS & MURMURS

STAGE FATHER

BY CALVIN TRILLIN

By now, my wife's policy on attending school plays (a policy that also covers pageants, talent shows, revues, recitals, and spring assemblies) is pretty well known: she believes that if your child is in a school play and you don't go to every performance, including the special Thursday matinée for the fourth grade, the county will come and take the child. Anyone who has lived for some years in a house where that policy is strictly observed may have fleeting moments of envy toward people who have seen only one or two productions of "Our Town."

One evening this spring, though, as we walked into an auditorium and were handed a program filled with the usual jokey résumés of the participants and cheerful ads from well-wishers, it occurred to me that this would be the last opportunity to see one of our children perform in a school theatrical event. That view was based partly on the fact that the child in question is twenty-six years old. She was about to graduate from law school. I was assuming that the J.D.s slogging through the bar-exam cram course would not decide to break the tedium with, say, a production of "Anything Goes."

As I waited for the curtain to go up on the 1995 New York University Law Revue, entitled "The Law Rank Redemption," I found myself thinking back on our life as parental playgoers. I realized that I couldn't recall seeing either of our daughters in one of those classic nursery-school-pageant roles—as an angel or a rabbit or an eggplant. I thought I might be experiencing a failure of memory—another occasion for one of my daughters to say, as gently as possible, "Pop, you're losing it"—but they have confirmed that their nursery school was undramatic, except on those occasions when a particularly flamboyant hair puller was on one of his rampages.

I do recall seeing one or the other of them as an Indian in "Peter Pan" and as the judge in "Trial by Jury" and as Nancy in "Oliver!" and as the narrator (unpersuasively costumed as a motorcycle tough) in "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat" and as a gondolier in "The Gondoliers." We heard their voices in a lot of songs, even if a number of other kids were sometimes singing at the same time. We heard "Dites-moi pourquoi" sung sweetly and "Don't tell Mama" belted out. All in all, we had a pretty good run.

I don't want to appear to be one of those parents who dozed through the show unless his own kid was in the spotlight. To this day, when I hear "One singular sensation," from "A Chorus Line," I can see Julia Greenberg's little brother, Daniel, doing a slow, almost stately tap-dance interpretation in high-topped, quite tapless sneakers. I'm not even certain what my own girls did in the grade-school talent show at P.S. 3 which I remember mainly for the performance of the three Korn brother One of them worked furiously on Rubik's cube while his older brother ac companied him on the piano. Th youngest brother, who must have bee six or seven, occasionally held up sign that said something like "Two Sides Go" or "One Side to Go." I have alway had a weakness for family acts.

I won't pretend that all school perfo mances were unalloyed joy. We used go every year to watch our girls tap dance in a recital that also includ gymnastics, and the gymnastics instru tor was an earnest man who seeme intent on guarding against the possibil ity of anyone's getting through th evening without a thorough understand ing of what goes into a simple somer sault. He described each demonstratio in such excruciating detail that I used to pass the time trying to imagine him helplessly tangled in his own limbs a the result of a simple somersault tha had gone wrong:

"Untie me," he is saying.

"Not until you take an oath of silence," I reply.

Even so, I came to believe over the years that my wife's policy on school plays, which sounds extreme, actually makes sense. It used to be that whenever young couples asked me if I had any advice about rearing children I'd say, "Try to get one that doesn't spit up. Otherwise you're on your own." I finally decided, though, that it was O.K. to remind them that a school play was more important than anything else they might have had scheduled for that evening. I realized that school plays were invented partly to give parents an easy opportunity to demonstrate their priorities. If they can get off work for the Thursday matinée, I tell them, all the better.

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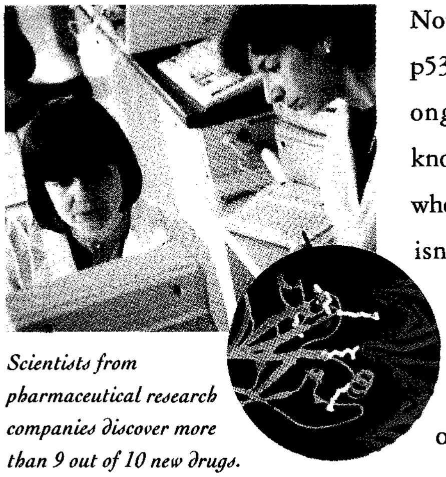

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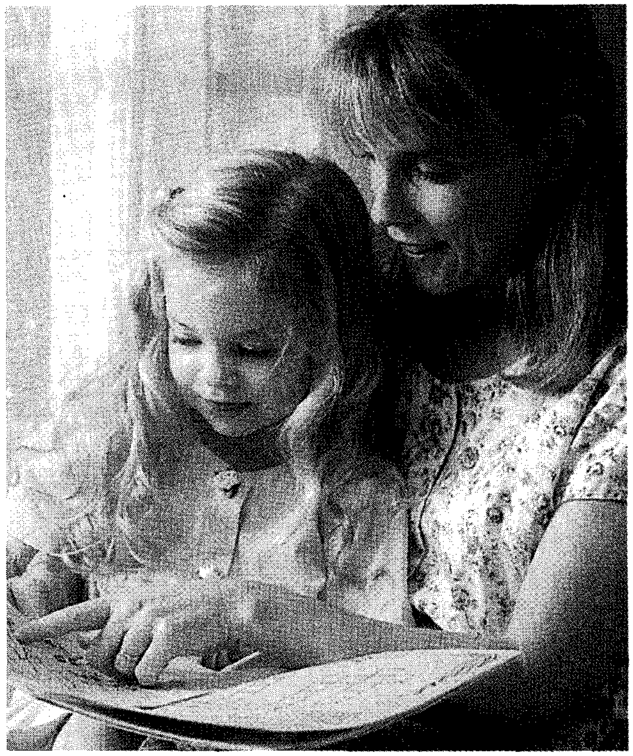

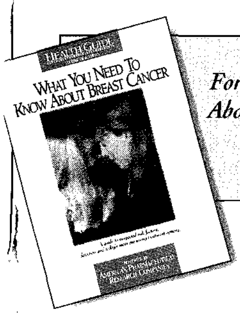

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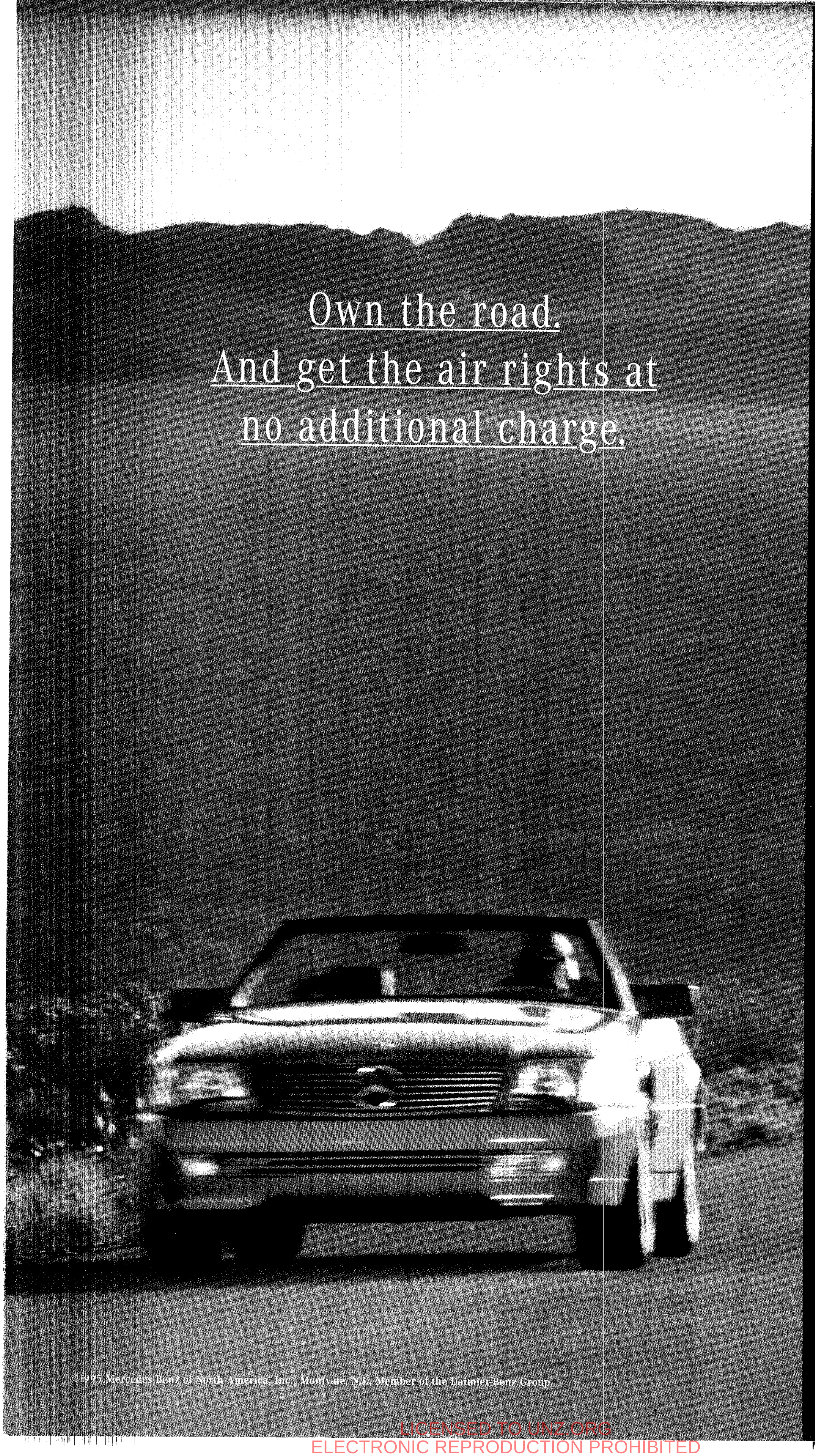
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